

H. M. EVANS*
THE
HISTORY
OF
MY OWN LIFE.
Being an
ACCOUNT
Of many of the
SEVEREST TRIALS
Imposed by an Implacable Father;
upon the most Affectionate Pair
That ever entered the
MARRIAGE STATE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

The SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed for F. NOBLE, at his Circulating Library
in *King-street, Covent-Garden* ; and
J. NOBLE, at his Circulating Library in *St.*
Martin's-Court, near Leicester-Square.
MDCCLVI.

H. J. EVANS

HISTORY

OF THE

BRITISH

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OF THE

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

IN THE HISTORY OF THE

BRITISH EMPIRE

THE

MARRIAGE

IN THE

VOL. I

THE SECOND EDITION

BY

H. J. EVANS

OF THE

BRITISH EMPIRE

IN THE HISTORY OF THE

BRITISH EMPIRE



P R E F A C E.

THOUGH in the present Age, the World seems to be wholly affected with Novelty ; and the Recency of the Fact from which any Work is composed, rather than the Incidents attendant upon it, for the most part creates a Demand for it; I shall make little further Apology for introducing the

A 2

fol-

P R E F A C E.

following Sheets to public View, than from the uncommonness of the Story, and surprisingsness of the Turns of Life that accompany it; being such as are scarce to be exceeded, if paralleled, in any one Family for Ages past.

I must confess, that had the Manuscript fallen into my Hands by any other Chance than it did, I should have been strongly induced to have ascribed the whole to mere Fiction; but being closely engaged, by the Nature of my Profession in tracing out the
Title

P R E F A C E.

Title of a very honourable Family, to the paternal Estate, from the Beginning of the last Century, and in severing from an Abundance of Rubbish, those Flowers only, which, when collected, might answer my Patron's Purpose, and evidence the Truth of his Pretensions to the Possessions he then enjoyed, it was my Fortune, amidst this Heap of Confusion, to cast my Eye upon the following Sheets, neatly sewed together, and intitled, *The History of my own Life.*

P R E F A C E.

The Oddity of the Title first striking my Fancy, Curiosity, so natural to Man, prevailed for my offering at such scanty Remarks, as might be obtained from broken Sketches only, on the Spot where my Duty lay ; and those only, in the Absence of my Employer.

The Story appeared to me so interesting, that my Inclination would submit to no Gratification inferior to a moral Certainty of the Writer ; this, at length, I gained, to a
De-

P R E F A C E.

Demonstration, by a Comparison of the History itself, with several Letters wrote in the very same Hand, and by the very Originals themselves, of those inserted in the Work.

Having thus far cleared my Way, I presented it to my Patron, as the Labour of the Ancestor I then named to him, requesting his Favour for my more serious Perusal of it. This he not only granted me, but having no personal Turn in his own Nature for Inquisitiveness, he, at my next Pe-

A 4 titution,

P R E F A C E.

tition, complimented me with the Work itself.

If I chance not to prove of the most uncommon Turn from the rest of Mankind, I may presume, no less Satisfaction may redound to them, than I must admit myself to have received from the Perusal of it; and though it was wrote, as near as I can guess, about an hundred and twenty-six Years ago, yet the Matter being incapable of Decay from Age, is of the same Importance for exciting the Passions now, as at the time of the
Trans-

P R E F A C E.

Transactions themselves : For severer Trials are scarce to be met with, than of the Parties here before us, or, indeed, more lively Evidences of the Interposition of Providence ; but not to anticipate the Delight the Reader may enjoy from pursuing the Narrative in my Authoreſs's own Words, I ſhall refer him to them, without further Interruption, than to apologize for leaving its Title as I found it ; though, in ſome meaſure to correct the Unmeaningneſs of it, I have added the main Drift of the Hiſtory to it, and for the
Reader's

P R E F A C E.

2 Reader's Satisfaction, I have somewhat modernized its Stile, and divided it into Chapters.

THE EDITOR.



T H E



THE
CONTENTS
OF THE
FIRST VOLUME.

CHAP. I.

Miss Biddy Farmer's supposed Parentage. Educated by her Godmother, Lady Betty G——s. Lady Betty marries the Earl of B——n. Takes Biddy into her Service. Death of Lady Betty. Biddy marries Lord G——r——d. Keep it secret.

Page 1

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. II.

Character of Stringer. Accompanied Lord G—r—d in his Visits to Biddy. Stringer's Villainy. Biddy reconciled. Stratagem to debauch Biddy; how prevented. Stringer is severely disciplined. 16

CHAP. III.

Biddy's Meeting with Lord G—r—d. The Faët related. By Biddy. By William. Stringer before his Lordship. His pathetic Speech. His Lordship's Generosity. Stringer discarded. 39

CHAP. IV.

Stringer gets in with the Earl of B—n. Perfidy to Lord G—r—d. Discovers Lord G—r—d's Marriage to his Father. Lord G—r—d visits his Father. Earl of B—n pro-

C O N T E N T S.

proposes a Match to him. His Evasion. Lord G—r—d denies his Marriage. His Confusion. 53

C H A P. V.

Reflections upon Vice. Bidy consents to Lord G—r—d's denying his Marriage to her. Reasons of Lord G—r—d's Condescension to the Earl his Father. Bidy quits his Lordship's Seat. Lord G—r—d's Letter to her after his first Visit to Lady Mary. A Mock-courtship. Match broken off. 68

C H A P. VI.

Interview of Lord G—r—d and his Father with Bidy. Denies his Marriage to Bidy through Fear. Bidy to be turned off. Charged with Breach of Faith to Lord G—r—d. He clears it. 89

C H A P.

C O N T E N T S.

C H A P. VII.

Lord G—r—d steals the Night with Biddy. Their Conflict. She follows him to Town. Meet daily. Travel proposed to Lord G—r—d. Distressed thereat. Repent denying their Marriage; resolve to confess it. An Excess of Joy sinks them both; but recovered. 106

C H A P. VIII.

Lord G—r—d discovers that his Travel is laid aside. His Inquietude. Resolves to undeceive the Earl. Another Match proposed for Lord G—r—d. His Lordship's Opposition. Owns his Marriage to Biddy. Fury of the Earl. 124

C H A P. IX.

Lord G---r---d and Biddy appear publickly. He dines with the Earl. Sends

C O N T E N T S.

Sends for his Children. Don't return at Night. Biddy's Horror. No Intelligence of them at the Earl's. Bidd follows to the Earl's. Her Reception there. 141

C H A P. X.

Biddy admitted to the Earl. Their Discourse. Wants her to part with her Husband. Second Interview with the Earl. Articles for parting proposed to her. Rejected. Threatens to procure a Divorce. Stringer witnesses against Biddy. As does Esther. Biddy despises them. 154

C H A P. XI.

Letter from Lord G—r—d to fetch Biddy to Dublin. She obeys. Near being undone by Stringer. Stringer's Accident. She discovers Stringer, in the Place of her Husband. 174

C H A P.

CONTENTS.

*Biddy claimed by Player as his Wife.
Strange Confusion to the By-standers.
Stringer claims her. They quarrel.
Turn it all upon Biddy. Threaten
her with a Prosecution for Bigamy.
Mrs. Newburgh responsible for her
forth-coming.* 189

CHAP. XIII.

*Biddy relates her Hardships to Mrs.
Newburgh. Mrs. Newburgh cre-
dits her. Biddy loses her Servant
and Baggage. Stringer hath a
Conference with Biddy. Purport.
A Scene of Villainy to distress
Biddy.* 206

THE



T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
M y O W N L I F E.

C H A P. I.

Miss Biddy Farmer's supposed Parentage. Educated by her Grandmother Lady Betty G——s. Lady Betty marries the Earl of B——n. Takes Biddy into her Service. Death of Lady Betty. Biddy marries Lord Richard G——r——d. Keeps it secret.

COMMON Remark is more common
N than of the Shortfightedness
of Mankind in general; yet
each Individual prides himself in a
VOL. I. B deeper

deeper Penetration into the Transactions of his Fellows than his Neighbour; but, probably, were all things to be exposed to an unscreened and naked Review, the greatest pretended Connoisseurs would appear to be the most deceived of any.

I am the rather induced to insist upon the Reality of my Sentiments, from the Example of my own self, now in my View, who had lived to my twenty-seventh Year, before I had imbibed the least genuine Intimation from any one, either who I was, or of what Name or Family.

I had been bred up as the Daughter of *Mary Thomas*, a Carpenter's Wife in the Liberty of *Westminster*, by her first Husband *Giles Farmer*, a Chairman to a very noble Family, not far from St. *James's*; but had received a much more liberal and polite Education, than usually falls to the Share of Children, descended from Persons of equal Occupation, either with my own, or my Step-Father:

Father: My Mother always accounting for it amongst her Acquaintance, from the Generosity of the Lady *Betty G——s*, in whose Service she had formerly lived, and who had honoured me with the Title of her Godchild, nay, so fond was she of me, that I frequently spent a Month or two at a time in her Family.

I was never put upon any manner of servile Labour at my Mother's, my Godmother having forbidden it; but my most usual Exercises were, either a Book, or Needle-work, in the former of which I most delighted; though I had wrought no small Quantity of the latter, for my Godmother, who never failed of rewarding me most amply for it; and then, nature having formed me of a most mild, and obliging Disposition, I was no less beloved by my Father-in-Law, than if I had been his own Child.

About my thirteenth Year, my Godmother was courted by the Earl of B———n, an elderly Gentleman, in respect of herself, who was then as fine a Lady, as most were in *England*.

This Nobleman, as the Story went of him, had in his very early Life arrived in *London*, a most helpless Lad from *Lancashire*, where he had left a very distressed Family, of several Brothers and Sisters behind him.

His natural Propensity to Business, and the Disdain wherewith he sustained a Life of Rags and Beggary (no Remedy against which presented to him in his own Country) together with the great Matters he had heard to be attainable in *London*, by such whom Fortune favoured there, invited him, to commit himself to the Patronage of a Carrier of those Parts, whom he had engaged to assist upon the Journey,

ney, for the Sake of his Provision by the Way.

The Lad proved so willing and tractable upon the Road, that on his Arrival in Town, the Carrier made a Point of recommending him, to the Tapster of the Inn he put up at. Here, by his superior Diligence, he did Credit to his kind Patron, and for the Space of two Years, behaved himself so inculpably, that the Carrier began to claim an Interest in him; Insomuch, that being one Day at the Delivery of a Parcel of Goods to a wholesale Dealer, who chanced to enquire of him after one of his Country Lads for an Errand-boy; the Carrier put in for his Pupil, by so favourable an Account of him, that the Draper, delighted with his Character, directly received him into his Family.

In about six Years Time, having picked up some smattering of Letters and Accounts, from the Journeymen and Apprentices, (for his

aspiring Genius suffered him not the Indulgence of idle Hours) he was advanced to the Compting-house, in which Capacity, soon becoming most necessary to his Master, he dived so deeply into the Mysteries of Trade, that about his twenty-eighth Year, his Master dying, he not only gained Credit for his whole Stock, but was held in such Esteem by the Factors, Clothiers, and others who had traded with his Master, for an active, industrious, and judicious Man, that through the Countenance they afforded him in his proper Occupation, he was soon enabled, even to outstrip them at their own, for he fell into so considerable a Way of Exportation, as scarce to be equalled, by a single Merchant upon the Exchange.

Wealth then rolling in from numberless Channels, his ambitious Inclination, ever restless till it became boyant, first byassed him to marriage with one of the most opulent

lent City Heiresses; when, to compleat the Progress of his Advancement, he purchased an *Irish* Earldome, in order to advance the Family of the *G—r—ds*; having some Time before, founded a Free-school, in his own native Parish, to perpetuate his Memory there.

The News of my Godmother's Marriage, was a severe Blow to me, who had ever built vast Hopes upon her future Benefactions to me: For the Dread of a rising Generation of her own, so damped my Expectations, lest they should not only supplant me in her Ladyship's Favour, but at length, wholly withdraw her Benevolence from me, that I became almost inconsolable, notwithstanding all my Mother's Endeavours to raise my Spirits; who, lest I should despond, daily cheered me with Assurances, that I need neither fear my Godmother's Affection whilst she lived, or her Concern for

my Provision, and that in an handsome manner too, at her decease.

This seeming Certainty of my Mother's, kept me still Heart-whole, nor wanted I Encouragement there-to, from the Steadiness of my God-mother's Proceedings towards me, even with as liberal an Hand as before her Marriage, nay, rather exceeding therein; till, in the fourth Year of her Marriage, she took me home to her, as a Companion for Lady *Margaret* her eldest Child, then much about three Years old.

Lord *B——n* had a Son (by his first Lady) Lord *G——r——d*, who was about two Years my senior, towards whom, for his obliging Behaviour to her, my Lady bore little less Affection than to her own Offspring; nor could she refrain from daily Testimonies of it, either to himself, or those about her.

So long as my dear Lady lived, I esteemed myself one of the most happy Creatures on Earth. I was
ex-

exceedingly diligent in my Employment, nor could my Care of her Infant-Daughter have been repaid with more possible Tenderneſs than my Lady conſtantly expreſſed for me: For I could plainly perceive, that ſhe ſtudied frequent Excuſions for the young Lady, merely for my Gratification and Amuſement; nor ſeemed ſhe ever better pleaſed, than when ſhe was ſure ſhe had delighted me: But this laſted not long; for my little Charge was ſcarce five Years old, when my good Lady her Mother died, of a Surfeit ſhe had taken, by eating Peaches when ſhe was hot.

My Sorrow for ſo invaluable a Miſtreſs, was paſt Expreſſion for ſome time; but as that by Degrees abated, I began to conſider with myſelf, by what means I might be aſcertained, whether my Godmother had made any future Proviſion for me or not; but as my Lord had never yet mentioned any ſuch thing,

nor had I ever heard of any Will that she had made, I took the earliest Opportunity that offered of calling upon my Mother for her Advice in the Affair; and to enquire, whether my Godmother had ever hinted to her, what she would do for me, and by what means.

My Lady had now been dead a full Month; but it being the very first Visit I had made to my Mother since her Death, she fell into such a Fit of weeping at Sight of me, as by no Intreaties of mine to be reclaimed from: I wondered not, at first, at the Extravagance of her Grief, imputing it to the Fondness she had imbibed for a former Mistress, who had ever proved so true a Friend to her; but, at length, could perceive she had somewhat at Heart, which she laboured with to greater Excess, than the Loss of a Mistress only could have occasioned.

On every the least Relaxation of her Passion she would fix her Eyes
im-

immoveable upon me; but when about to utter her Mind by Speech, the Tears would again interrupt her Intention, till seizing the Opportunity for venting my Errand to her, she assured me, that she had often heard my Lady say, that she would give me ten thousand Pounds in Marriage, could she but procure me a Match suitable to her own Inclination; but added, that she would not disclose so much to me, least it might make me vain, and above my Business. My Mother also insisted, that she was well assured my Godmother, by some means or other, had made a Provision for me; but, as I was fearful of mentioning any such thing to the Earl, we let it rest till Time might produce a Discovery.

It was a little more than three Months after the Decease of my Lady, that Lord *G—r—d*, who, from my first Introduction into the Family, had behaved with an uncommon Complacency towards me,
de-

declared his Passion for me in the most finished Strains ; which, tho', from a Sense of my Duty to his Father, I at first neglected, yet his frequent Repetitions of the same, accompanied with the profoundest Regard for me, and Solemnity of his Engagements of an honourable Affection only, at length became Arguments too potent for me to withstand.

His Lordship's Tender of Marriage prevailed for my Consent ; and after very slight Preparations for that Solemnity, we were privately united in Wedlock : For his Lordship insisted, that it should be reserved as a Secret from his Father, lest, being in his own Temper very lofty, it might move him to disinherit him.

I could not but judge this Caution prudent, and for some little time after we were first married, his Lordship seemed as desirous of my still retaining my Post in his Father's Family as I myself was ; but that
lasted

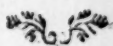
lasted not long; for as he was, to all Appearance, excessively fond of me, we being unable to steal so many uninterrupted Meetings at his Father's as his Lordship seemed anxious for, he soon insisted upon my leaving the Earl's Service, and retiring to a private Lodging that he had provided for me. For *Biddy*, said he, it cuts me to the very Soul, to hear you commanded, even by my Father himself; nor can I bear to be the daily Spectator of a Person so dear to me, in a less worthy Station than becomes my Lady.

The singular Obligations I stood indebted to his Lordship in, exclusive of the Love I bore him, which was not to have been exceeded, had already reduced me to a perfect Acquiescence in his every Sentiment; and I obeyed him. He accommodated me at a little Distance from Town, in as elegant a Taste as could become his Lady, under the Fortune he was then possessed of; but he
soon

soon coming of age, and thereupon, to an Estate which had been left him by his Mother's Uncle, of upwards of three thousand Pounds a-year, with an elegant Family-seat upon it; he then presented me with a Chariot, and further enlarged our Family and Attendants; when, lest our Meetings should become too public, so near Town, I was removed to his Seat in *Hertfordshire*, about twenty-five Miles from *London*, where he usually spent four Days of the seven, in each Week with me.

I had brought his Lordship three Children, two Sons, and a Daughter, in as many Years; of all whom he was so extremely fond, that they became fresh Guarrantees of our subsisting mutual Affection, and Confidence; nor could any two on Earth be more intimately attached to each other, than his Lordship and I were.

I had had but little Opportunity of my Mother's Company, during my Residence near *London*, and much less, since my Retirement to *Hertfordshire*: For knowing how exactly scrupulous Lord G—r—d was, of divulging our Marriage, I had not only avoided all my former Companions, who might, through Jealousy, have suspected it from my Manner of living; but had in great Measure, extended the Caution even to my Mother herself, though she had been present at our Nuptials; insomuch, that I had not seen her thrice since I had been settled in the Country; but Mr. *Thomas*, her then Husband, had often been at my House, on many Occasions, in his way of Business.





C H A P. II.

Character of Stringer. Accompanies Lord G-r-d in his Visits to Biddy. Stringer's Villainy. Biddy reconciled. Stratagem to debauch Biddy ; how prevented. Stringer is severely disciplined.

IF it was possible for a Man to have adored his Wife for Years together, certainly, Lord G—r—d was the Instance ; and if it was possible for a Woman to have had neither Will or Affection, but what were excited from Love and Obedience to her Husband, I must without vanity, declare myself to have been the Example, who can safely affirm, that in every Action in Life, my Choice was determined, solely, from the Motive of its agreeableness, or disagreeableness to his Pleasure ; nor had

I

I the least Reason in the World for varying my Conduct; for my dear Lord was ever so cautious of limiting his Inclination, till by a side Advance, he had discovered mine, that though I appeared to have been actuated by his Propositions, yet in fact, he offered none, but what he was assured would receive my Countenance, and Approval.

Thus exquisitely did our Time pass, for the first four Years of our Marriage-state; nor had I, or have I now, the least doubt but that it would have so continued for our whole Lives, without Interruption, had our Union so long remained a Secret from Lord B——n; but Fate had otherwise ordained; for in our fifth Year, Lord G—r—d, out of the peculiar Regard he had for one Mr. *Stringer*, an old School-fellow of his at *Eaton*, and his constant, and almost inseparable Companion when in *London*, brought him down
to

to pay myself and the Children a Visit ; for that as he then assured me, *Stringer* and he having such an entire Confidence in each other, as from their Infancy, to have been animated but with one Soul, he was certain he could trust him, equally with himself ; nor could he longer endure the Uneasiness he had suffered, in conserving the Secret of our Marriage from him.

His Lordship having ever been so anxious for persevering in privacy, I replied, that himself was the best able to judge of Mr. *Stringer's* Taciturnity, and I hoped, that from a sense of Affection for his Lordship, nothing would escape him to his Lordship's Displeasure ; but owned, that as he had so long been detained from the Knowledge of it, I could scarce have imagined, it would have been an Inconvenience, had he still remained so.

My dearest *Biddy*, said his Lordship, *Stringer* and I commenced
Friend-

Friendship, at eleven Years of age, and have inviolably maintained it ever since.—Poor Man! added he, though born to the Expectation of a pretty Fortune, his Father's Affairs at his Death, turning out inexpressibly bad, I have, from the constant Regard I ever bore him, allowed him a Support from my own Income, when it was at first, but eight hundred a-year, and always defrayed his Expences, whenever we were in Company together, which I may say, hath been almost daily; and since I have been in possession of my Uncle's Estate, I have pensioned him at two hundred Pounds a-year, besides clearing his Way in my Company as before; from whence, and from the natural Tendency of his Inclination to me, I am well assured, that he would die upon the Rack, before he would disclose the least Tittle of what I should enjoin him privacy in: For I have ever been persuaded, that he rejoices

rejoices at my Gratification, even beyond his own.

His Lordship having thus quieted my Fears relative to Mr. *Stringer*, and pleasing himself at *Stringer's* Participation of the Enjoyments of Life with us; he being a most accomplished Gentleman, and an agreeable Companion, for some Weeks constantly brought him down with him, and at his Return, took him back again; till he and I by Degrees growing familiar, his Lordship would some times leave him behind him for a Day or two, in his own Absence, to keep me Company.

This had not often happened, before *Stringer*, to my thinking encroached too far upon the Liberty granted him, which set me upon my Guard against a too close Intimacy with him; but 'one Morning, his Lordship, upon his Departure for *London*, intimating his Design of staying there for the best part of the Week, Mr. *Stringer* laid hold of
that

that Opportunity, for pushing his Suit to me with great Earnestness; in direct Terms, offering me his Love: Nay, so importunate was he, that it even put me to a Non-plus, in what manner I should behave to him. For, though I received the Indignity with all becoming Disdain, yet, as an open Discovery of it, might in its Consequence, have much affected his Lordship's future Peace, I was desirous of some serious Reflection upon the Subject by myself, before I proceeded to that Extremity, which my natural Inclination most prompted me to, and which I judged, my own Character to require; so that without other Testimony of my Resentment, than was apparent from my Countenance, occasioned by the adverse Suggestions of my Mind, I starting up, rushed violently out of the Room, and retiring to my Chamber, left him.

It

It would be impossible to describe them, were I to attempt a Disclosure of the several Workings of my Brain, in my Solitude. In the Height and Vigour of my Resentment, I had resolved, by my own Authority, to have forbidden him the House, and in case of his Non-compliance, to have impelled him thence, by the Aid of my Servants.

As my Passion subsided, I slackened in my pursuit of these violent Measures, by reflecting, that should I dismiss him before my Lord's Return, his own Story would of Consequence be first heard, which in the Dress he would undoubtedly clothe it with, might possibly prejudice his Lordship in his Favour, and in equal Measure, draw my Story into discredit with him; for which Reason, I wholly discarded that purpose.

Then, how to appear in *Stringer's* Presence again, distressed me to no small Degree: For, as I was in Health,

Health, I could have no plausible Plea for keeping my Chamber, till his Lordship arrived ; neither had I the least apparent Reason, in the Eye of my Family, publickly to shew a disregard to *Stringer* ; and if I should withdraw myself at Meal-Times, what Suspicions might it not minister, injurious, perhaps, to myself, no less than to him ? So that having seriously weighed all Contingencies, by the nicest Balance of my own Judgment, I at last determined to stifle my Displeasure till I should see his Lordship, and then, to submit the whole Scene to his Opinion.

I appeared therefore the next Morning at Breakfast as usual ; but had ordered one or two of the Children, with their Nurse, into the Room before I entered. Mr. *Stringer*, as customary, paid me his Compliments, which I returned, as slightly as possible ; and Breakfast ended, I went off with the Nurse and little Ones ; and thus I behaved at Meal-times,

times, for the three remaining Days of his Lordship's Absence.

Mr. *Stringer*, had no doubt, remarked my Conduct ; however, he had sufficient guard over himself, to prevent any further Indiscretion ; so that having behaved himself more steadily for the latter Part of the Time, I was too much delighted at my Lord's Sweetness of Temper to us all, to cast any Rub in its Way, at his Return ; and after a few Days passed altogether, I became so well reconciled to *Stringer's* Carriage and Deportment, little mistrusting a Repetition of his Addresses, that I seemed to have overlooked what had passed ; and at my Lord's next Departure for *London*, he taking *Stringer* with him, I saw no more of him, for a full Month after.

Mr. *Stringer*, at our next Interview, behaved with so much Diffidence, and Caution of offending me, that relying upon the Sincerity of his Reformation, after a short Probation,

bation, I again admitted him to a Familiarity with me as before, having absolutely banished all Suspicion, of his ever renewing his Attack upon me : But let me caution all young Ladies who may hereafter have any Attempt made upon their Virtue, never more to confer with the Man, who from such an Overture, doth but too manifestly expose the Bent of his natural Principles ; for whatever Glosses we may shadow over his Actions with, the End will verify this Prediction, that his whole Artifice will be ever after upon the Stretch, for every Opportunity, upon the least Concessions made him, to circumvent her ; for every Act of his seeming Contrition, will but be placed in her Way as a Snare, to facilitate a future Conquest.

About four Months afterwards, his Lordship again left Mr. *Stringer* in the Country with me ; but whilst I was void of every Surmise of Mis-

chief from him, it appeared he had not been so idle, as I had imagined him to have been; for he had concerted the most execrable Plot against my Honour that ever Man could invent.

My Woman, in my Lord's Absence constantly lay with me; and I had ever believed her to have been one of the most deserving of her Sex; and the furthest Person in Life, from either a Tendency to Vice in herself, or being a Favourer of it in others. This Woman, having, as she pretended, been out of Order for best Part of the Day, in the Evening, desired leave to go to Bed before me, which I granted her.

Mr. *Stringer* and I had supped together as usual, and I had taken leave for Bed; after which, according to my nightly Custom, I withdrew into the Nursery, to look at my Children, where I commonly spent half an Hour, in chat with
their

their Nurse, before I retired to my own Chamber.

I had now left her, and found my Woman in Bed, with her Back to my Side, and her Clothes in the accustomed Manner, lying upon a Chair by the Bed-side, but she seeming to sleep very composedly, I undressed as gently as possible, and stepped softly into Bed, that I might by no means disturb her, and then I put out my Candle.

I had scarce settled myself into a sleeping Posture, before I felt her turn about, and presently, I found her Hand stretched across my Breast. This I gently removed, for fear of waking her; but I had not wholly composed myself again, before the Arm was again over me, and from some unusual Motions, gave me no small Disquiet. However, I displaced it a second Time; but the Ruffle it had occasioned to my Mind, had debarred my Eye-lids from closing, till upon the third Attempt

C 2

of

of the like Nature, growing into some Displeasure, and attempting to remove it with some Emotion, I met with a more violent Resistance, than I was able to overcome.

I then resolved to awaken her, and to rate her into better Manners; but having turned my Face to her, upon my first Endeavour to rouse her, I was enclasped in her Arms, and almost stifled with Kisses. The Roughness of the Face that saluted me, terrified me to Distraction, I set up such a violent Shriek, as would almost have roused the Dead; nor did I in the least desist so long as either my Breath or Spirits, would serve me.

The extravagant Out-cry that I made, and the Struggling I used, to free myself from an unwelcome Embracer, extracted the Mystery of my Surprize, from the Mouth of the perfidious *Stringer*, who still grasping me in his Arms, intreated me not to raise such a Scandal upon myself,

myself, his Lordship, and him, as the Discovery of the present Incident would occasion; but I was deaf to all his Rhetorick, extending still my Voice so successfully, that at length my own Footman knocked at my Door, to enquire what was the Matter.

No Reprieve at the Instant of Execution could ever have been more welcome to a condemned Malefactor, than his Voice to my Ears. *William*, said I, force your Way in, or I shall be murdered. Raise the Family, or I am undone for ever.

Stringer lay all this while terrified out of his Wits; and begging me to be pacified, swore horribly, that he would then leave me, and declared, that if I persisted in detecting and exposing him to the Servants, he would be the Death of me first; but when I insisted upon his rising, he refused to quit me, and would not suffer me to stir from him; alledging, that he was determined

not to set me at Liberty, meerly to let in the Servants upon him.

By this time my whole Family were collected about my Door, and by their repeated Blows, had broken out the under Pannel, when the first Gleam of Comfort that I beheld, was a Candle, and the Head of *William*, entring through the Breach, after it.

Being now fully sensible that Relief was at Hand, but reflecting on the Posture I lay in, (all the Bed-clothes having been cast upon the Floor in our Struggling) I cried out to *William* to retreat, and to send in some of the Maids only, and for himself and the rest of the Men, to wait without, till the Door should be opened to them.

The Fellow, at my Orders withdrew himself, when three of my Maids approaching me, they disengaged me from my Oppressor; though not without the Exercise of some Violence; for though he was
almost

almost confounded at the Expectation of some horrid Scene to succeed, he had never once as yet let go his Hold of me. My Maid then hurrying on my Cloaths over me, with all Expedition, gave me a Glass of Hartshorn and Water, to keep me from fainting: For having exhausted my whole Fire in the Scuffle, when my Reflections came to cool a little, it was with the utmost Difficulty they could keep Life in me, from the Horror which then surrounded me, at the Thought of what might have proved the Consequence of that perfidious Wretch's Device, for my Destruction.

I was no sooner capable of a Removal, than my Maids retired with me into my Dressing-room; where, having secured me from further Mischiefs, I ordered them to open the Door, and let in the Men upon *Stringer*. They did so, and instantly, there arose such an Uproar, that

myself and Maids, who were within hearing of it, expected no less than Murder to have been the Issue of it, on one Side or the other, every Moment; but the Men not inclining to act otherwise than under my Direction (for it was but too apparent to them, not only what had been the Injury, but who the Aggressor) knocking at the Door, demanded what I would please to have done with *Stringer*?

My Head was so full of the narrow Escape I had been favoured with, and my Rancour still so inveterate against *Stringer*, that I furiously cried out, Act as you will with the Villain; use him as he deserves, a base Ravisher.

They waited but for an Hint to exasperate them to an unlimited Fury : For away they ran to the Bed; Arise! arise, Madam! cried they, (for he had still got my Woman's Night-clothes and Shift on) Madam, pray dress yourself. We'll lay the Spirit
of

of Adultery in you presently—The World is come to a fine Pass, in truth, when Ladies turn Ravishers. —Arise ! I say.

Stringer, not well knowing how to behave in this Dilemma, addresed himself to them, in the most supplicatory Manner, begging them to withdraw, and he would attend their Pleasures presently; but they, all Fury, swore they would never leave him, till they had seen what sort of a Lady he was, then drawing off all the Bed-clothes, which since my Deliverance, he had replaced over him; the Coachman began with a Lash, and a Word; for no sooner had we heard the Smack of the Whip, and a Cry from *Stringer* succeeding it, than up, up, said he, and dealt him another Cut; when I presume he became compliant, for we heard not a Word more, for about two Minutes. Then, a loud Holloo arising, and as loud a Laugh succeeding it, we

perceived by their Discourse, that Madam was at a Loss, how to get properly incased, in her Woman's Habit.

There then followed such a Clamour for some time, that it was difficult, to have guessed at any Meaning to it; and at length, after another Shout, they all marched off, crying out as they departed, that Mrs. *Esther*, (meaning my Woman) must have been a Confederate, or how came he by her Clothes; vowing they would search her out, and discipline them both together, but they were soon out of our further hearing, for the last Words which reached us were,——Gentlemen!——good Gentlemen!——give me leave to make my Defence,——I have much to say.——Hear me Gentlemen!

It was not long before we heard another Shout; but it sounding flat, and at a Distance, we judged it to have been raised in the Coach-yard, which

which the next Room to that we were in overlooked; when the Day just beginning to open, the Maids were not to be restrained from peeping at what was going forward there.

My Head was too full of the Blessing I had just received, to permit my Attention to wander after what they all esteemed a noble Piece of Diversion, but a Report was soon made to me, of all that had happened, at second hand; for the Wenches told me, that the Servants having conducted *Stringer* to a large Pond we had in the Yard, where our Horses used to be watered, they obliged him to mount the Parapet, with a long Rope tied round his Middle; then, after some Expostulations on the Nature of his Offence, down they threw him into the Water, whilst others, by the End of the Rope, dragged him out at the shallow Entrance; and this Exercise they repeated so often, that at length
the

the Criminal was so spent, that he could stand no longer; when drawing him after them to the Horse-dunghill, they laid him along, and covered him all but his Head in it, assured him they did it that he might sweat freely; for that nothing would be more beneficial to him, after his Ducking-bout.

The wretched *Stringer*, (by this time, fully sensible there was no contending against a licentious Set of Fellows, guided only by the Law of their own Wills) submitted as patiently as possible, to whatever Fate they should allot him; and whilst he was under his Sweats, a Deputy from the Main-body was dispatched for my Orders, whether to admit him into the House, or to turn him adrift in his then wretched Condition.

I rejected both Proposals, rather inclining to a middle way. As to the former Part of their Demand, I declared peremptorily against his
Ad-

Admission into the House, upon any Terms ; and as for the latter, I was as averse from a too Publick Exposure, lest it might create Rumours in the Neighbourhood, not only scandalous to himself, but, in their Construction, prejudicial to his Lordship, and me too : for when once Fame hath published any Relation, its Currency is not so much regulated by the Facts themselves, as by the Dispositions of its several Reporters ; so that no Innocence of Parties can confine it to the Truth only ; nor doth it often happen, that Propagators of Scandal are wholly exempted from its Retortion upon themselves in the Long-run ; for which Reasons, I ordered *Stringer* to be secured, and reserved for their Lord's Pleasure, whom I expected in the Afternoon.

As for *Esther*, though all imaginable Diligence had been employed in the Search after her, she was nowhere to be found ; nor did I ever
hear

hear what had become of her, till she afterwards appeared as my Accuser, for the very Crime herself had so concerted with *Stringer*.



C H A P.



C H A P. III.

*Biddy's Meeting with Lord G—r—d
The Fact related. By Biddy. By
William. Stringer before his Lord-
ship. His pathetic Speech. His
Lordship's Generosity. Stringer dis-
carded.*

LORD *Richard* arriving some-
what sooner than ordinary that
Day, and just as I was called down
for Dinner, I could (rather than
have discomposed him) have even
concealed *Stringer's* scandalous Be-
haviour to me; but then the Duty I
owed to his Lordship, on so im-
portant a Subject as his Wife's Re-
putation and Honour, and the In-
jury intended to himself, would no
longer admit of his Lordship's har-
bouring in his Bosom a Creature,
who, in so tender a Point, had me-
ditated such an Injury against him.

His

His Lordship had ever, on his first alighting, made whatever Room I then happened to be in, his first Lodgment; but being now informed that Dinner was upon the Table, and that I was then descending the Stairs, his first Stage was into the Parlour, where he might so soon expect me.

Upon my entering the Room to him, he, as his Manner was, running to embrace me, I sunk from his Grasp upon my Knees; nor could I restrain my Eyes from Discharging the Issues of a bitter Soul at his Feet. his Lordship started back at the Sight; what means my Angel? said he. Are you ill? Are the Children ill?

Alas! my dear Lord, said I, none of these things would thus have moved me. Health is the Gift of Heaven, and may be dispensed or retracted, at the Donor's Pleasure; but my Heart is touched with a Sense of Horror, arising from a different

ferent Spring; for surely nothing less than an infernal Agent could have premeditated an Injury, so nearly perfected against my Honour and your own Repose, as that I am now to relate to you.

His Lordship standing aghast at my solemn Preface, and anxious for the Knowledge of that History which was to succeed it; detain me no longer in Suspence, my dear Wife, said he, but explain yourself.

Alas! my dear Lord, said I, Doubts conspire to start a Difficulty in my Breast, whether I am still your Wife or not. O! my *Biddy*, replied he, proceed, and stretch me no longer thus upon the Torture. If, my good Lord, added I, to have surrendered myself, in naked Bed, to the Arms of another Man, can have cancelled the conjugal Obligation, I am yours no more.

Distraction end me! said his Lordship, or reveal to me this Mystery (the Water then glittering in his

his Eyes) My dear Lord, said I, the Torments you feel, must extract a Declaration from me, of what I could have wished, it might have consisted with my Duty to you, to have concealed; but as every Tye in Nature urges me a contrary Way, know, that the Villain, *Stringer*—Ha! cried his Lordship, *Stringer*! and a Villain too! Proceed, my Love, proceed. That Villain, *Stringer*, added I, dressed in *Esther's* Likeness, assumed her Place in my Bed last Night, I having given her leave, under a pretended Indisposition, for going to bed before me.

I am but too well satisfied, my dear Lord, added I, from the Tenderness your Lordship hath ever expressed for me, that your Breast is now fired, by this Report; but my Lord, that I may cast Water upon the Flame, be assured, that the Arm of Providence hath protected me from his Machinations. I then repeated to him the whole Process of
the

the Affair; but insisted, that if *William* had not accidentally heard me, and presented himself to my Relief, it would have been impossible but I must have been overcome.

His Lordship, still trembling at the Adventure, extracting his Purse from his Pocket, clapped it into *William's* Hand; there, honest Fellow, said he, take that, and remember, as I ever shall, that I stand Debtor to you, for all in Life that is valuable to me. Then clapping his Hand upon *William's* Shoulder, he demanded a circumstantial Account from him, of when, and how, and what, charging him to deliver it most minutely.

May it please your Lordship, said *William*, my hearing of my Lady was surely the most accidental thing imaginable. Her Ladyship well knows, what a tempestuous Night the last was, even beyond what I almost ever remember. I had but just fallen to sleep, when the Wind,

as

as I suppose, having displaced some of the Tiles just over me, the Water poured upon me like a Deluge ; infomuch, that I was obliged to quit my Bed. I remained for some time in my Chamber, till growing uneasy at the Darknes of my Situation, I resolved to go down for a Light, rather choosng to employ myself there till Morning, than to sit idle in my own Room ; but I had no sooner reached the Stairs-head, than such dismal Shrieks reached me there, from below, that I shuddered at the Noise, and became dubious whether I had best to proceed or not. However, the Cry continuing (lest Murder might have been committed before I could discover from whence the Voice came, in case I was not very expeditious) I pushed forwards at all Hazards ; but how was I confounded, at passing my Lady's Door, to perceive it issuing from her Apartment.

I immediately called to her Ladyship to let me in, but was answered, break in, break in. I then set up an Outcry, and endeavoured to raise the Family, whilst I still kept forcing against the Door with my Foot; till the violent Report of my Kicks, commixed with that of my Voice, had brought all the Servants about me, when, by our united Attempts, we at length made way through it. At my Lady's Request, the Women first entered, for some time before the Door was opened to us.

My Lord said, he hoped we had not suffered the perfidious Rascal to escape; when the Servants all together replied, they had not, but had kept him till his Lordship's Pleasure should be signified, how he would have him disposed of.

My Love, said his Lordship, since you have received no further Injury than a severe Fright, my Heart is at Ease; but my Honour will not admit, that such a Scandal to human
Na-

Nature as *Stringer*, and such an Indignity as has been offered by him to us both, should pass unpunished; nor ought the Wretch, who has broke through all the Bands of Friendship, Gratitude, and moral Honesty, to survive this glaring Villainy.

The Dread I all along had, of what would prove his Lordship's Sentiments, I told him, had almost prevailed with me for suffering his Escape, before his Lordship came; but that the Point was too nice, for transacting incautiously, which had determined me to detain him; but, my dearest Lord, added I, suffer not your Hands to be imbrued in Blood so detestable; rather let Justice, offended at his Crime, equally with your Lordship, take an Opportunity of avenging you: For sooner or later, a Perseverance in Deeds so atrocious, will bring down Vengeance on his Head, whilst your Lordship's Arm shall remain unpol-

luted. It is your Lordship's Engagement to accord with my Request, that I now press for; nor need you fear, ever holding yourself as culpable, for his Dismission.

During all Dinner Time, his Lordship was so full of Questions, to me and the Servants, that he had even learned every minute Particular; but now, the Danger being past, and recovering his Chearfulness again, when they related the Manner of *Stringer's* rising, and dressing in *Esther's* Clothes, their fousing him in the Horsepond, and his succeeding Sweat in the Dung-hill, I thought his Lordship would have cracked his Sides with laughter.

He highly commended the just Chastisement they had bestowed upon him, acknowledging, that himself could not have adapted Punishments so adequate to his Demerits; and, my Dear, added he, since your Ladyship seems to dread
the

the Effects of my Displeasure to *Stringer*, rest assured, that having already undergone so just Discipline, I shall only give the Rascal the Strappado, and for ever discard him from my Family, and Friendship.

Dinner was scarce removed, when his Lordship ordered *Stringer* before him, who told his Conductors, that he could, with far more Pleasure, have faced Death in the Horsepond, than he should be able to confront his Lordship.

I had begged leave to retreat before *Stringer* appeared, as judging it would not be so prudent in me, to be present at his Examination, and that before the Servants too, whom his Lordship could not well dismiss from their Attendance, after the Zeal they had already shewn in his Service. This also, his Lordship judging noways improper, I was by him desired to step into the next Room, from whence I might hear all that passed, and be able, if need-
ful,

ful, to clear up any Difficulty, or contradict any false Assertion.

Stringer had no sooner beheld his Lordship, than prostrating himself before his Patron, and in the most pathetic Manner declaring, that he petitioned not for Pardon; he assured his Lordship, that the Excess of his Passion for me, had impelled him to an act, not only dissonant, but absolutely contradictory, to his clearest Reason; and that his inordinate Desires had rendered him, for the time, actually out of his Senses, or he had never aimed at the Perpetration of so ungenerous a Fact. That he was sensible of the Heinousness of the Transaction, and of the little Confidence his Lordship could ever, for the future, find Reason to repose in him: that it was his earnest Request, his Lordship would take from him a Life so justly forfeited to his Justice, rather than to expose him, not only to the Buffetings of his own Conscience, but to the Ignominy

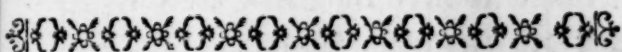
and Contempt of all Mankind, for such an unparaelled Ingratitude, to so generous a Benefactor, as his Lordship had ever proved to him.

Observing that this moving Speech had wrought tolerably upon his Lordship's humane Disposition, he strained his Voice to a still higher Pitch. Alas! my Lord, said he, hesitate not a Moment to rid the Earth of a Reptile unworthy of a Name on it. Let not your Compassion for what *Stringer* hath been, withhold your Hand from what he now merits from you; nor let my Crimes render me so contemptible in your Eye, as to restrain you from bestowing the sole Boon I durst presume to demand of you. I wait the merited Stroke with Impatience, which failing me, from your Injured Arm, my own distracted Heart must urge me to perform. Let me therefore intreat you, Sir, as the last Act of your Clemency, the only remaining Testimony of your still
sub-

subsisting Compassion for me, to revenge yourself of this detested Being, to whom Life can be of no future Account, under the Complication of Miseries your Frowns must introduce.

In short, *Stringer*, by this Harangue so mollified his Lordship's rigorous Sentiments of him, that instead of the Severities he had purposed to exert towards him, he commanded his Clothes to be restored to him (for he was still in *Esber's* Livery) and having first privately ordered an Examination into what Cash his Pockets abounded with, which, upon the Survey, amounted but to Three Shillings and Sixpence (it wanting but three Days to the Quarter, whereon he would have received from his Lordship Fifty Pounds) with a Bank-note for that Quarteridge slipped into his Pocket, he discharged him, under positive Injunction, never more to appear before him.

No sooner had his Lordship expelled *Stringer*, than, calling me in and embracing me; My dearest *Biddy*, said he, what a world of Mischief might have ensued, had this libidinous Man obtained his pernicious Views? My dear Lord, replied I, had that proved the Case, your Lordship can scarce conceive you would now have had me to have condoled with you upon it. How so, my Love? returned he; you would have been no way culpable in submitting to superior Force and Necessity. Alas! my Lord! replied I, could any Superiority have prevailed with me, to have survived both my own Disgrace and your Dishonour? No, My Lord, *Stringer* should never have gained the Advantage of me, till I had struggled myself past all Probability of ever reproaching him for it, I can assure you.



C H A P. IV.

Stringer gets in with the Earl of B—n. Perfidy to Lord G—r—d. Discovers Lord G—r—d's Marriage to his Father. Lord G—r—d visits his Father. Earl of B—n proposes a Match to him. His Evasion. Lord G—r—d denies his Marriage. His Confusion.

THOUGH his Lordship, by the Expulsion of *Stringer*, had driven out a Viper from his Intimacy, who might have been dangerous by the near Approach of his venomous Jaws; he had but converted him thereby into a Basilisk, whose Effects are more sensibly felt at a Distance: For whilst his Lordship and I were enjoying ourselves for best Part of the Summer in the Country, *Stringer* being destitute of all further Protection from his Lord-

D 3

ship,

ship, was playing his Cards at *London* for his own Benefit.

His Fifty Pounds, with which his Lordship had dismissed him, being almost sunk, and no Prospect of a further Recruit presenting from his old Channel, he had applied his Wits for securing to himself a fresh Stream.

He purposely cast himself into the Way of the Earl of *B——n*, with a Face collected into Chagrin, and an old thread-bare Suit of Clothes on, wherein he made a far worse Appearance than he had ever as yet been seen in by that Nobleman; insomuch, that the old Earl, who had long been apprized of his Son's Benefactions to him, took Notice of his Dejection, and enquired, when he had last seen Lord *G—r—d*? For Mr. *Stringer*, added he, my Son has not been used to suffer his old Friend to appear in this indigent Guise, nor could I have expected to have seen you thus, whilst my Son could have
af-

afforded you a more suitable Accommodation.

Stringer shook his Head, as seemingly smothering somewhat in his Breast, that he was unwilling to divulge; which only served to set the Earl upon an Enquiry into what it was he meant, and what it was which had prevented the Prosecution of his Son's Kindness to him. The Earl put the Question to him; but *Stringer* replied, No, my Lord, if I am to suffer, let it be my Lot to sink alone; far be it from me to betray my Friend, at least into the Hands of a Father, who, should his Indignation burn out against him, hath it so amply in his Power to resent it.

This Flourish of *Stringer's* had its Effect; for now the old Earl, impatient for the secret History of his Son's Proceedings, and judging that *Stringer's* Wants would render him more supple than his Inclination, applied himself solely to them, by

signifying, how well he had ever esteemed him as a Friend and Companion of his Son; adding, that rather than he should be too sorely distressed, from any Cessation of his Son's Liberality to him, himself would allow him an hundred Pounds a-year, just to enable him, as a single Man, to sustain the Appearance of a Gentleman; for that his Father and he, in their juvenile Years, had been Fellow-club-mates, and Intimates themselves,

Stringer returning the Earl many Thanks, assured him, that his Favour, extended to a Wretch like himself (in the generous Offer he had made him, at the very lowest Ebb of his Fortune) would for ever attach him to his Lordship's Service.

Matters, in the Earl's Opinion, growing now fully ripe, as an Earnest of his future Liberality, pulling out his Purse, wherein there were at least thirty Guineas, he presented
it

it to *Stringer*, lest he should stand in present Need of any thing; and then returning to Lord G—r—d, he enquired how he went on; for that since his Accession to his Uncle's Estate, he had been almost a Stranger in his Family. You, Mr. *Stringer*, added he, may be presumed to have known his Concerns and Management of late, though I am a Stranger to them; for young Fellows generally disclose these things last of all to their Parents, who ought, indeed, to be the first Persons their Concerns should be exposed to, as best able, beneficially, to advise them; but, indeed, it is mostly otherwise.

Ah! Sir, replied *Stringer*, it must be a cutting Stroke to me, to be obliged to betray my old Friend's Secrets; but the sooner a Remedy is applied the better. I really neither know what to say, or even think, of his late Transactions: For having procured himself a She-friend, whether Wife or Mistress, it may be

difficult to say; but having by her a growing Family, an Houseful of Children about him, and herself a teeming Woman, vain and extravagant, in the Support of whose Luxury, he is kept as poor as a Frier-mendicant; what a Chance then, must a Friend of Lord G--r--d's stand, from her Generosity? For nothing being sufficient for her Ambition, not a single Penny can flow from his Lordship but through her Hands.

Now what has displeased him from me is, added *Stringer*, the candid Advice I have given him, not to suffer himself to be thus imposed upon; together with some plain Hints of her Levity, and Inconstancy to him, and those from my own Knowledge too: For would you imagine it, Sir? added he, she had the Impudence, in his Lordship's own House, to come to bed to me one Night, in the Absence of her Husband, Paramour, or what shall

shall I stile him? Nay, so fraught with Deceit and Management was she, that upon his Lordship's Return, (the Affair having taken Wind) she had the Address to turn the Tables upon me, in Vindication of her own Innocence; all which, the poor deluded Husband made no more Scruple of yielding Credit to, than to the Gospel. O! Sir, added he, she has too much Artifice, for so well meaning a Man as Lord G—r—d.

You confound me! replied the Earl. A Wife, say you, are you sure she is his Wife?—Why, Man! I had rather he should keep a Dozen Whores, than have one Wife, unless of my own procuring. But pray, what Fortune, and of what Family is the Lady? Why, here again, my Lord, said *Stringer*, your Goodness must excuse the Exposure of my Friend's Folly.—Who is she? who is she? good Mr. *Stringer*, said the Earl, with some

some Impatience. Your Lordship knows her, said he.—Dear Mr. *Stringer*, without more ado, name her, said the Earl. I am really almost ashamed, replied *Stringer*, to inform your Honour, that it is your late Lady's Maid, *Biddy Farmer*.

Undone! said the Earl.—*Biddy* a Lady!—*Biddy* my Daughter!—But there are Hopes, still.—She can but be his Mistress, and then all will be well: For between you and me, Mr. *Stringer*, I am at this Time treating for a Marriage with Lady *Mary C—d—n* for him; and a vast Fortune she is.—Nay, Preliminaries are within another Meeting of being adjusted on both Sides; so that as I said before, I hope there is no Marriage between them, and then, a Piece of Money will patch her up for some needy Fellow, who will gladly snap at his Lordship's Leavings, for the sake of the ready Cash.

Here,

Here, *Stringer* interposed with his Advice to the Earl, not to be too sanguine in his Hopes, lest (as he feared it would prove) Lord G—r—d was already incapacitated for any Match he might provide for him: For that, if his Information was true, I was actually his Wife, and vouched for his Author, my late Maid *Esther*, who, as he informed the Earl, knew much more of the Matter than himself.

This set the Earl into a most violent Passion, nor could *Stringer* by any Means pacify him, but by producing *Esther*, to avouch her Knowledge in the Affair.

Mr. *Stringer* and *Esther*, as was most probable, from what hath before been said, were no great Strangers to each other, for the very next Day he produced her, when she, by several Circumstances, corroborated the Fact of the Marriage, as that I went by his Name, was called my Lady, wore a Wedding-Ring,
and

and that she had often heard Lord G—r—d, in speaking of me, stile me his Wife, and me at Times, stile him my Husband ; nor had she ever heard it suspected, either in our own Family, or elsewhere, that we were other than Man and Wife.

All this being so plainly made out, the Earl swore if it should prove true, that he would disinherit his Son, and cut him off from every Expectation of his Estate. Then recommending it to each of them, to redouble their Diligence, for reducing the Affair to an absolute Certainty one Way or other, he promised them ample Gratification for their Pains.

The Earl might have saved both himself, and his Agents much Trouble, had he but patiently waited a Day or two longer ; for in that Time, Lord G—r—d paid his Father a Visit. He perceived an unusual Coolness in the Earl, upon his first Approach to his Presence ; but had

had not the least Suspicion from whence it proceeded, till after a short Pause on both Sides; Son, said the Earl, I am treating of a Match for you, and as my Children by my second Lady, must have a Provision out of my Estate, I am desirous of conjoining you to the Daughter of a noble Lord, my very good Friend, whose ample Fortune, will in a great Measure compensate, for what will be drawn from you by the younger Branches of my Family.

Lord G—r—d was so abashed at this Intelligence, that he was unable to reply to it; when his Father again put it to him, how he liked Lady Mary C—d—n? His Lordship answered, that she was certainly a most deserving Lady, but that having at present, not the least Thoughts of making any Alteration in his Way of Life, he hoped his Father would give himself no further Trouble upon his

Account. That his constant Prayers were for the Earl's Life, to enjoy what he had; and that whenever his Glass should be run out, whatever he should be pleased to assign him, would be sufficient for his every Purpose, without incumbering himself at present in the Marriage-state; for that he could not as yet say, when he might be inclined to Matrimony.

Son! Son! said the Earl, looking very sternly, cast no Dust in my Eyes. This Corn is too light to decoy old Birds with. Come, come, explain to me.—Who have you with you at your Seat in *Hertfordshire*? My dear Lord was ready to sink into the Earth, at this so sudden, and unexpected Push, nor dared he to make the least Reply to a Father, the Rigor of whose Severity he had ever so much dreaded, and on former Occasions, had so often felt.

What!

What! said the Earl, have you no Answer ready for me? Let me have no Palliations, tell me the naked Truth. What Woman, I say, is it, that you keep in *Hertfordshire*? His Lordship being sensible, there could be no Room for Evasion of a Fact, which most probably, his Father was no less apprized of, than himself, replied, that she was his Wife. Rascal! said the Earl, tell me truly, that she is your Whore, and all is well: For let me hear but the Name of a Wife; and I shall from henceforth disclaim all manner of Relationship to you.

His Lordship, well nigh terrified to death, at the Fury which had spread itself over his Father's Countenance; but hoping to mitigate his Passion, by a Compliance with what he perceived to be so much his Inclination, begg'd pardon for the Untruth he had rashly been guilty of; but added, that his Passion prevailing

vailing, for persuading a late Servant of his Honor's to submit to his Embraces, he had ever since found her so agreeable to him, that he had still retained her to himself.

Well! well! Lord G—r—d, replied the Earl, I am glad to hear it is no worse.—Young Fellows will be amorous.—Nature must be assisted.—And since you have behaved with Discretion, these Sallies must be passed over;— but, do you hear, part with her,—part with her forthwith, and as I am informed, you have Children by her, either give her a Sum of Money to take them off your Hands at once, or settle some little Matter upon them. I'll take care to make it up to you, upon your Marriage: For I would have all clear and easy, on the Introduction of your Lady.— Be with me at Dinner To-morrow, and you shall pay Lady *Mary* your first Visit in the Afternoon, whilst her Father
and

and I finish the Treaty we have been upon.

His Lordship, who during his Father's Harrangue, had been studying what to reply; begg'd to be excused from his Attendance upon the Lady the next Day, having appointed Business of the utmost Consequence, for that Time, which he could no Ways disappoint, but assured the Earl, that he would soon take an Opportunity of waiting upon him for that Purpose.

Tell me of no Engagements, said his Father; you can have none of equal Consequence, either to your self or me, with the Match I have proposed to you. None of your Put-offs therefore, I do insist upon your dining with me, and then making the Visit.

Lord G—r—d then perceiving, that all he could urge towards a Delay would prove ineffectual, seemingly consented to obey, and took his Leave.

C H A P-



C H A P. V.

Reflections upon Vice. Biddy consents to Lord G--r--d's denying his Marriage to her. Reasons of Lord G--r--d's Condescension to the Earl his Father. Biddy quits his Lordship's Seat. Lord G--r--d's Letter to her after his first Visit to Lady Mary. A Mock-courtship. Match broken off.

SURELY, did Mankind but deliberately consider the Consequences attendant on one vicious Action, not all the Gratifications upon Earth would ever bias them to the commission of it.

Never was any Man more experimentally sensible of this than my dear Lord, when seriously reflecting on the Falsity he had been guilty of to his Father, he beheld the Train of Miseries, which, step by step,
suc-

succeeding each other, had all been superinduced by that one gross Lie, he had thought to have sheltered himself under, from the instant Wrath of an incensed Parent, at the time he declared me to have been only his Mistress, and not his lawful Wife.

He left the Earl under the most pungent Concern at his Command for attending him to Lord C--d--n's as the next Day. He returned to his Lodgings, threw himself on his Bed, where he passed the Night in the greatest Agonies, till Morning. He resolved not to meet his Father, according to Appointment, nor to subject himself to the Consequences of that detested Interview with Lady Mary.—What had he done!—how had he involved himself in inextricable Difficulties (would he say) by that one fallacious Article of denying his Marriage with me, which, sooner or later, must prove him a Liar!—He arose, wrote
to

to his Father, read the Letter, and immediately burnt it.--The Thoughts of me, and of his dearest Children, each of us more precious to him than his own Heart's Blood, distressed him to the last Degree.—He resolved to publish his Marriage to his Father; but with what Face could he now deny what he had so lately asserted as a Verity! and how could he proceed, upon the false Grounds he had published to him! nor could he ever hope for a Relaxation of his Father's Anger, upon a Retraction of his late Declaration to him.

He formed but too true a Judgment upon the Earl's implacable Temper, to hope for any Return of his Favour, after a Disclosure of the gross Imposition he had put upon him; and dared not, after the Commission of such a Fraud, to appear again in his Presence; but, still uncertain how to behave, he ordered the Chariot, and drove down to me.

It

It is scarce credible, what an Alteration a few Days, I may say a few Hours, had occasioned in his Lordship; and he did not, in the least, aim at concealing his Discomposure from me; but stalking into my Dressing-room, more like a Spectre than a living Man, he fell upon my Neck, and during a long Silence, profusely lavished forth his Tears into my Bosom; whilst I, wild with Confusion, urged him, for Heaven's sake, to an Explanation.

His Heart was yet too full, and his whole Frame too much agitated to reply, save with the bitterest Sighs and Groanings; till by now and then a broken Sentence, I could perceive his Strugglings were on my Account. This still heightening my Curiosity for the Cause, I grew almost Frantick, till he should be able wholly to disburden himself before me; then, clasping him in my Arms; O! my dearest Lord!

my

my Life! my Husband, said I, either explicate the Occasion of your Sorrows, to me, or plunge your Sword into the detested Breast, which hath created you all this Woe; rid me from the World, and from the most painful State of Uncertainty, your Grievs have thrown me into, and under which, it will be impossible for me, long to subsist.

Be it what it will, my dear Lord, added I, so that it is not any Error or Misconduct of mine, that hath thus reduced you, I shall rest content, if I may but be permitted to share the Burden with you; but, my Lord, your silent Tears, torture my very Soul to Distraction: For leaving me nothing to hope, they fill me with every Dread, that can possibly torment the human Mind. Speak! speak then, my good Lord, pour all your Troubles into my Breast, and there, whatever

ever Griefs they may demand, let me sustain them.

His Lordship, having by this Time conquered the first Struggles of his Passions, O *Biddy*! said he; how shall I ever more behold thy Face, after the Abuse I have put upon thee! He then flooded me again with his Tears. It cannot be, my dear Lord, said I, that you have abused me, or be it so, I remit it all.—I am satisfied you wrong yourself. Nay, what Injury can you possibly have done, equivalent to these Tears, to me, who live but for you.—Say, that you have wronged my Bed; I am sure it was through Inadvertency, or by Surprise, and I can still forgive it, from my Heart forgive it; but let not my dear Lord overwhelm himself with Grief, upon my Account.

No, *Biddy*, said his Lordship, that never could have proved my Case. No, my Love, my Trouble springs from a want of Truth and

VOL. I. E Fidelity

Fidelity to thee. Tell me then, my dearest Lord, demanded I, what it is you would further disclose to me? O! *Biddy*, said he, I have, before my Father, denied you to be my Wife.

I am too well convinced, said I, of your Lordship's Affection for me, to imagine that any Thing, less than the most forcible Necessity, could have prevailed with your Lordship for such a Declaration; nor can that or ought conjoined to it, unsettle the just Esteem I must ever bear for your Lordship, whilst I can be persuaded of my present Station in your Lordship's Breast. Nay, my good Lord, added I, so wholly am I yours, both in Will and Affection, that, believe me, if to rank again in my former Station, would in the least but contribute to your Peace, you might command me freely, and meet with an implicit Obedience from me; let but your Love accompany my Calling:

ing: For as without this, the sublimest Pomp this Earth affords, would but prove a worthless Imposition on me, so with it, no possible Depression of Fortune, can afford me the least Disquiet.

I desired his Lordship to inform me, how it came to pass, that I should be introduced as a Topic of their Discourse at his Father's? His Lordship then acquainted me with all that had passed between his Father and him, relative to his Marriage with the Lady *Mary C—d—n*, and by what Means he had been induced so far to falsify, as to deny his Affiance with me.

My dear Lord suffered so much, during this Relation, as moved me prodigiously; when, intreating me not to weep, he begged my Pardon for his Error; but it was the last of its kind he would ever be guilty of; for that his cool Reflection had determined him to break through, not only the Ties of filial Duty, but

every more interesting Obligation, rather than to submit to the Horrors he had ever since been haunted with.

Pardon me! my Lord, said I, these Tears flow not for myself (for I wept abundantly) but from a Sense of the Sufferings you must have endured, at being compelled to vitiate the Character of one so dear to you, as I hope I have ever been, and shall never cease to be.

After tedious Debate upon the Subject, our Resolves, at length, all centered in this, that his Lordship (with all due Submission) should write to the Earl, by way of Excuse for not meeting him, till he was assured whether he could dispose of me without Tumult or Disturbance: For that, should any Questions be demanded of him by Lady *Mary's* Friends concerning me, he chose to have it absolutely in his own Power, to deny my having any further Dependance upon him; so that, so
soon

soon as Things were settled, he would pay his Duty to his Lordship.

This, my Reader will say, was a very odd Scheme for me to have come into; yet the chief Contrivance of it was my own: For what would I not have done, what would I not have submitted to, that might but have rescued that dear Man from a Moment's Disquiet, whose Soul was wrapt up in me and my little Infants?

We little considered with ourselves, when he had formed this Device, that it could prove no other than a patched-up Truce between the Earl and us, which might, probably, procure to Father and Son some few more friendly Meetings; but then, we penetrated not into the Succession of those dark Consequences which were to ensue; nor though we acted upon this wild Principle, had each of us a Distrust of the other's Integrity; for could that have

for a Moment subsisted between us, we had never left it in the Power of either of us to have distressed the other, or the Earl himself to have distressed us both.

The Earl's Honour must, of Necessity, descend upon my Husband, but without his Estate too, which was very considerable, what his Lordship was in Possession of, exclusive of his Father's annual Bounty, amounted to but little more than Three Thousand a-year; too scanty a Pittance to attend the Dignity: So that it was the Prospect of his Father's Estate, or at least a good Part of it, that had kept his Lordship in such a servile Dependance upon him; for though his Lordship had often, with great Sincerity, wished himself but a private Gentleman, in which Sphere his then Income would have answered his every View in Life; yet his Lordship had a Spirit, which would not easily acquiesce under the Title of an Earl,
devoid

devoid of an Estate suitable for the Support of that Dignity.

It may be wondered at, perhaps, that his Lordship should not have been intitled to any Estate at his Father's Death, in consequence of any Settlement upon his Mother (whose Fortune I have before mentioned to have been very large) his Lordship, being her only Child; but I must inform my Reader, that she being, within few Months, of Age at his Father's Marriage with her, and her Fortune being wholly in her own Hands, the Earl had so wrought upon the Lady to expedite their Marriage, that the Settlement was deferred till her Arrival at the Age of twenty-one; but before it could be perfected, she dying in Child-birth of his Lordship, he was left wholly dependant on his Father.

We now made all the Preparations possible for my quitting his Lordship's Seat, with my Children, for a Retirement that he had provided

vided for me about ten Miles farther in the Country; nor did his Lordship delay waiting upon his Father, for a longer Space, than the Necessity of the Case might seem to require; but his Lordship's main View was, by starting frequent Objections, to protract Time so, that possibly, his Father might die before Matters should be pushed to such Extremity, as to compel him to adhere to my Marriage, which he had reserved at his last Resort.

I was as well situated with my Children, in my new Habitation, as I could have wished, under so great a Privation of my Husband's Society as then threatened me; but his Lordship's daily Vexation at parting with me (fresh Accounts of which he each Post transmitted to me) blunted the Edge of every flattering Idea, and kept me under far more Disquietudes for his Sake than my own.

His

His Lordship, by Letter, gave me account of his first Interview with Lady *Mary*, so pleasantly, that, for my Reader's Satisfaction, I shall hereto subjoin it in his own Words.

My ever dear Biddy,

YOU may, with far more Facility guess at, than I can describe, the Violence I am obliged to offer to my Nature, whilst engaged in so disagreeable a Pursuit, as I am here enlisted into.

I Yesterday paid my first Visit to Lady *Mary*, accompanied with my Father; when, after about half an Hour spent by us in her's and her Father's Company, his Lordship, taking my Father out of the Room with him, undoubtedly proposed thereby, to give me an Opportunity of paying my Addresses to that Lady.

I cannot say, but had I been disengaged, or had I never known you, my Dear, that there could have

happened any thing in the least unpleasing, to a Man of nicer Taste than I am, in Lady *Mary's* Company, who is undoubtedly as accomplished as the Sex can well admit of; but with what Spirit was it possible for me to exert the Talents of a Lover, to any other than my beloved *Biddy*? Had I addressed the Woman, it must have been directed to thee, in her, none other being capable of inspiring that Passion in my Breast than thy dearest self; but somewhat must be said and so it was; for after a full fifteen Minutes Silence, I blundered out, in an aukward manner, the Blessings attainable in the Marriage-state, between such as made Love the chief Motive of their uniting in it.

I presently perceived I had over-shot the Mark, or could I conceive her such a Fool, as to believe the Motive mine, when our two Fathers had so long been adjusting the Articles, as to have well nigh brought

brought them to Conclusion, before I had ever apprized her of my Sentiments, or had received the least Return from her; and indeed, I received a most pertinent Answer from her; in a Concession, that it probably might be as I guessed; but having given herself no Trouble hitherto, in the Disquisition of such Affairs, she could not reply from any prior Surmises of her own, upon the Subject.

Had I but possessed the least Fragment of Love, or could I but have assumed a gaiety of Temper to have personated the Lover at that time, I should soon have been inspired with a ready Reply to her Answer; and though of no material Consequence, our Conversation might have been kept up, till their Lordships had again entered to our Relief; but I became so shocked at all Thoughts of raising Expectations in her, which my own Heart would condemn me for, that turning the Discourse to
meer

meer Matters of Indifference, the Monosyllable, Love, or ought else to be deduced from it, was not so much as once more hinted at between us.

I must do the Lady the Justice to say, that she supported my Indifference with a perfect Resignation, considering it proved what she could by no Means have expected, from the Preparation she had undoubtedly made to have received me as a Suitor; however, before we were both run aground, for want of farther Subjects to have proceeded upon, our Fathers presented themselves before us, in little Doubt, I presume, of our having made a fair Beginning.

Our Visit was now soon ended, and my Father assured me, as we returned home, that he having adjusted all Matters with Lord C--d--n, it would be needless in us Young-ones to make a tedious Affair of it, and therefore recommended to
me,

me, the pushing our Courtship to a Conclusion as soon as possible.

He would fain have been let into the Particulars of my Requests, and her Answers, with all that had passed between us ; but I replied, that our Words being directed by the Suggestions of our Minds, upon occasional Circumstances, as they accidentally arose, it was impossible for me to repeat them.

I begin to have a far more indifferent Notion of this Artifice than ever I had, and as my Father insists upon my seeing her again To-morrow, and so every other Day, I must throw all at Hazard, rather than totally deprive myself of yours and my dear Children, one Moment with whom, out-weighs an Age with all the World besides, in the Esteem of.

Your most affectionate Husband,

R——D G—R—D.

I

I shall not take upon me to transcribe several other of his Lordship's Letters, on the Subject; but I from them collected, that Lady *Mary's* Father had complained to the Earl, of the Coolness of his Son's Behaviour to that Lady, which the Earl excused, as much as possible, from Lord *G—r—d's* Bashfulness; but as his Affections, he was certain, was fully settled upon the young Lady, he doubted not, but as he grew to greater Intimacy with her, he would be more sanguine in his Addresses.

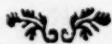
His Lordship paying his Visits regularly, by compulsion of his Father, without the least further Progress in the Affair on his Part; the old Gentleman, he told me, had prepared the Settlement, and appointed a Day for the Ceremony, which his Lordship, on pretence of some Failure in the Deeds, had caused to be put off, more than once or twice; till at length, grown quite weary of
I the

the Mock Scene, without Prospect of coming off at last with Honour, he resolved to proceed no longer, in a Course so opposite to his Inclination; and now, nothing offering to prevent their Marriage at an appointed Day, my dear Lord summoned up his Courage, to acquaint Lord C—d—n of his former Marriage, and that the Courtship he had carried on with Lady Mary, had been entirely under Compulsion of his Father, whose fiery Nature, had hitherto obliged him to conceal the real Truth; and then intreating his Lordship's Pardon, he begged him to find some Means of dissolving the Treaty, and that, if possible, without endangering his Lordship's future prospect with his Father.

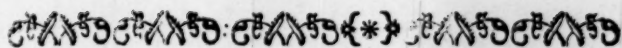
Lord C—d—n, he sent me Word, stood as one Thunder-struck at his Report, acknowledging his Lordship's Justice, in revealing the Truth, before Consummation, but
blamed

blamed him exceedingly, for having suffered it to proceed so far first; and finally, forbid him his House for the Time to come.

The Ice being now broken, and my dear Lord not daring to face his Father again, he fled forthwith into the Country to me; but under such Confusion of Mind, as nothing that I could say or do would dissipate: For though his Affection for me was invariable, and would break through every Weight that oppressed him; yet the Anguish of my Mind, was no less than his own, for several Days that we had now been together: But our Union had not been of above ten Days Continuance, before we were roused by a most unexpected Visitant, who alone, claimed every Part of our Attention.



CHAP.



C H A P. VI.

Interview of Lord G—r—d and his Father with Biddy. Denies his Marriage to Biddy through Fear. Biddy to be turned off. Charged with Breach of Faith to Lord G—r—d. He clears it.

AS his Lordship and I were walking Arm in Arm in our Garden one Day, and seriously debating upon past Occurrences, one of our Servants running to us, informed us that a Coach and Six was arrived at the Gate. We immediately gave Orders for shewing the Company in, and we would wait upon them presently; but turning short to receive them, who should be labouring up to meet us, but the Earl of B——n.

The Sight of his Lordship so near us, pierced like a Sword through

through us both; but as it was then too late to fly, we mended our Pace to receive him.

His Zeal, for engaging us without a Moment's Loss of Time, was so great, as to have spurred him forwards with such Celerity in his Motion, that being a very corpulent Man, and Phthificky, his Lungs wrought so by the Time he met us, as not to suffer him to adjust his Words to a speechable Medium, so that we were wholly at a Loss for his Errand, for a full quarter of an Hour, most of which Time Lord *G--r--d* and I, had been upon our Knees, in Hopes of receiving his Blessing; but though the old Gentleman had several Times made Essays for uttering his Mind to us, yet, being unable to utter forth more than a Syllable at once, and that most unintelligibly, we had not yet been enabled to guess, whether his Intent had amounted to a Curse, or a Blessing; though if any Credit might have

have been given to the Language of his Eye, the only legible Part of his Countenance; for his Cheeks, Mouth, and Nostrils, wrought like a Smith's Bellows, in one Key all the while, we both dreaded the former.

At length, perceiving us still to be kneeling before him like Statues, he, by two or three hasty Elevations of his Hand, signified to us his Command to rise. We obeyed, and Lord *G—r—d* perceiving his Father in such an Agony still, and well knowing that it was but with Difficulty that he could retain his Legs for any long Season, he ran for a Wooden-stool, which stood in a Summer-house at the farther End of the Walk, for him to sit on.

I, who was not apprized of his Lordship's Intent in making off so fast, being left alone with the Earl, was almost beside myself, lest his Lordship should have meditated a
more

more distant Trip ; and the more so, when in his Absence, finding the old Gentleman scarce able to stand, I running to support him, was spurned from him with the utmost Indignation, and his great Crutch-headed Cane brandished at my Head.

His Lordship was now returned with the Stool, upon which his Father soon seated himself, when his Vigour by Degrees returning ; what? said he, young Man, am I to be made your Dupe? your Tool? your Make-game? Rascal? added he, how dared you to set me to Match-making for you, when you knew yourself already married?—Married! did I say, it cannot be that thou art married! Sirrah! thou can’st not be married to that false, intriguing Gipsy.—What? shall it be said that a Descendaut of Lord *B——n*, who might have been presumed to have inherited his mental Qualifications, hath been tricked into Matrimony,

mony, by a designing, wheedling Strumpet, who has outstripped him in Artifice?

What have I been doing all my Lifetime? Curtailing my reasonable Enjoyments, and diminishing the Figure I might have made in the World, and by every Means scraping Riches together, and all to have left such a mean spirited Scoundrel a Support to his undeserved Title.— But, Wretch! I'll leave you naked, as I first received you from your Mother, and let your beggarly Title descend to this Creature's Bastards, if it will; for lawful Issue they can never be, begotten against all Sense, Reason, Decency, and the Will of your Parent.

The old Gentleman having run himself out of Breath in his first Heat, and panting most enormously, till he had recovered his Wind again; at length, began somewhat more moderately in his second Course, whilst his Lordship and I were withdrawn

drawn almost behind him ; till calling to his Lordship, Son, said he, (though this, perhaps, may be the last time of my ever calling you so) come forward, nor suffer that deceitful Woman's Insinuations to weigh ought in the Answer you shall make to the Demand I shall offer to you. I ask you seriously, therefore answer me solemnly ; you have told me you are not married to her, and till she again beguiled you with her Flatteries, persisted in it, and then you again confirmed it to Lord C—d—n that you was. I say, I demand a peremptory Answer from you, are you married, or are you not?

Lord G—r—d looking down, as pausing upon what Answer he should return, I, who stood opposite to him, and so far behind his Father as not to be discerned by him, made every Sign I could invent, to engage his Lordship to a Denial (for the dreadful Sentence of never more calling him

him Son, had made a deep Impression on us both) which his Lordship perceiving, and himself also concluding it would prove the sole Means of averting his threatened Ruin, with a faltering Accent replied, that he was not.

Can I credit this? said the old Gentleman. You may, Sir, replied his Lordship. Then calling over his Shoulder to me, Hark ye, Madam, said he, come forward, and answer me (though I doubt not of finding you in a contrary Note) do you look upon yourself to be Lord G---r---d's Wife? So far as Promises, and mutual Engagements of the most sacred Fidelity to each other, can render me, I do, Sir, replied I.

Tell me of none of your Fidelities and Engagements, said he; my Son has persisted too long in an Error already, and high time it is that he should now rectify it: Therefore, Madam, do you hear me, take notice, that from this Day forward you must

must look out for a new Keeper. My Son has done with you; and since he knows not how to behave himself at Liberty, I shall take him home with me, and keep him under my own Hand.—What Breed of Bastards is there between you? I replied, that I had four Children. Very well! said he, they must not starve; take notice, my Son shall leave you all the Furniture of this House, make the most of it for your Subsistence, send the Brats all to Service as they grow up, they'll soon earn their Bread, and yourself may get into fresh Keeping under some other Coxcomb; then think yourself very well off.

My Tears were, under Difficulty, restrained within their Sluices, at this ignominious Treatment of myself, and the pretty Infants; though I smothered them as much as possible, lest they should augment Lord G—r—d's Pain; but the Earl observing me just ready for a Discharge;
What

What would the Woman have more? said he; are you uneasy that the Cart's Tail should be omitted out of your Sentence? which, in good Truth, but for my Son's sake, would have been a most deserved Portion of it.

May it please your Lordship, said I, Lord G--r--d hath hitherto proved a Man of too much Honour to have had a Thought of abandoning me, and four poor harmless Babes, under the scanty Maintenance your Lordship would propose for us. His Lordship doubts not but the Children are his own, and if so, they are your Grand-children; then, suppose we are not married, yet those Innocents descending from you, must surely claim some little Title to your Regard, above a Desertion to Want and Penury.

Ay, ay, said the Earl, it is what I expected; a virtuous Woman, no doubt, and the Children all my Son's, and my Descendants no

question; but who, think you, in their right Wits, will give credit to what a Prostitute will say?

My Lord, answered I, whatever Censure you may judge my Actions liable to, I'll appeal to your Son for my Fidelity to him; if ever I have strayed, either in Thought, Action, or Inclination, from the purest Faith to Lord G--r--d, let me meet no Favour from either of you. No, my Lord, whatever Reproaches your Honour may load me with, I am assured they can meet with no Countenance from your Son.

Vile Hypocrite! deluding Syren! said the Earl; that may pass on him, but never will on me, I'll promise you, who am better apprised of your Transactions than he is. With what an hardened Impudence can you deny your Amours with other Men, and those whilst in my Son's Keeping too? neither by Chance, Surprise, or Accident, but voluntarily
and

and premeditately, even to the seducing them, and prostituting yourself to them, unfollicited.

This Charge, rousing my Spirits to a most exalted pitch, lest Lord G--r--d should be induced to afford the least Ear to it, I replied, that if his Honour intended that Scandal only to render me more odious to his Son, I could forgive it; but if he spake but with the least Notion of receiving it himself as a Verity, I despised his Menaces, and defied either himself or any Man else, to charge me culpably with it; nor could I have imagined, that through Rancour against me, he could have submitted to the broaching of so palpable a Falsity, which must put him to the Blush, for want of the least Colour to support it.

The Vehemence I spoke with, and the Reflection it carried with it, so nettled the old Gentleman, that, come, said he, since nothing but downright Fact will content you, I

shall instance in one Person, most flagrantly; and should you be so daring as to deny it, he shall vouch it to your Face.

I verily believe, the whole Blood of my Body was then collected into my Cheeks; for they burnt like Fire at the Apprehension of what Lord G--r--d might think of this: When brushing up to the old Gentleman most intrepidly, I have heretofore, Sir, said I, esteemed you a Man of too much Honour, to assert as a Fact, what all the World cannot demonstrate; but pardon me, if I now suspend my Opinion of you, till you name the Person, from the least Crime with whom, be he who he will, if I cannot clear myself to your own Satisfaction, may I be turned out a wandering Vagabond upon the Face of the Earth, unworthy of the Pity or Regard of the honest Part of the Creation. I defy you, Sir, I defy you.

Pray,

Pray, Madam, said the Earl, will it offend, should I enquire whether you are not acquainted with one Mr. *Stringer*? I *have* been, said I.— A Villain! said Lord G--r--d.— How Son! cried the Earl, before you hear what I have to say of him. Sir, replied my dear Lord, I have too much to say of him myself, to imagine your Lordship may not have more; but I'll forfeit my Life, if, with Justice, you can alledge any thing good of *Stringer*.

May I be bold, Sir, said I, to ask what of Mr. *Stringer*? Nay, Madam, replied he, only I have heard that he has been an intimate Acquaintance of yours, and that you have been inclined to admit him to private Familiarities, such as became not that strict Fidelity to my Son, which you so much boast of. I admit him to Familiarities? said I. Only as your Bedfellow, or so, added the Earl, that is all; and pray, why may not my Descendants (as you
F 3 idly

idly call them) be the Descendants of Mr. *Stringer*, with equal Certitude as mine?

Lord G--r--d was too far irritated, any longer to contain himself. My Lord, said he, you have suffered yourself to have been grossly imposed upon, in the Conclusion you would deduce from a Fact that I must admit to be true; but, that every one may receive their just Due, give me leave to crave your Lordship's Patience for a few Words.

Yourself, Sir, are not uninformed of the Regard I have ever borne to Mr. *Stringer*, even from my Childhood. Your Lordship knows he hath been my Bosom-companion, and that his sole Support for many Years, has depended upon my Bounty. I have never twice heard *Stringer* in want of what lay in my Power to supply, though I have more than once been sensible of the Loss of those Donations I have bestowed on him. In short, Sir, there is not
that

that Thing to be named, which might have engaged a grateful Heart, but Mr. *Stringer* must acknowledge himself my Debtor for.

This Man, my Lord, or rather Brute ; my Friend, my second-self, noways doubting this Lady to be my lawful Wife, during the Entertainment that I gave him in my Family, plotted her Destruction ; and combining with her Servant, procured her Dress, and taking her Place in my Bed, in my Absence, this Lady, as your Lordship hath observed, went to Bed to him. — But how, my Lord ? Not in Vice or Wantonness, but through the Perfidy of her Woman, who, in my Absence, ever took my Place in this Lady's Bed, and, at this time, pretending Illness, desired leave to go to rest before her, when, in her own Form, she placed *Stringer* there in her stead.

Now, my Lord, consider how this Lady could, in that case, be esteemed culpable. Surely ! by no means :

But let me beg your Lordship's Ear, whilst I rehearse the Consequence of this Imposture.

No sooner had this Lady discovered the Fraud, than she raised the Family; caused the Villain to be apprehended, and dressing him in the Maid's Clothes, first had him dragged through the Horsepond, then buried in the Dunghill, and lastly, confined to the Stable with my Dogs and Horses, till I returned from *London*; when he confessed his Crime, disclaimed all further Title to my Friendship, and even to Virtue and Honor; nay, intreated me rather to stab him, than deliver him alive to such Wretchedness, as he must ever after be abandoned to.

I make but little Question, that by this Time, your Lordship is persuaded, added my dear Husband, that the Treatment *Stringer* met with from this Lady, if she valued him, as your Lordship would intimate, was the most extraordinary
Me-

Method of expressing her Affection, that you have ever heard of: But this, my Lord, for the latter Part of it, myself can avow, and can bring every Soul in my Family, to testify all the rest. Now, though your Lordship retains but an indifferent Opinion of this Lady's Honour; yet, common Justice requires, that none should suffer, from an Imputation not their due.

The Earl, by this Time beginning to suspect *Stringer* for a Knave, and perceiving that Lord *G—r—d* was proceeding to resume the Discourse, desired that he might walk into the House, for that he should be glad of a Glass of Wine after his Journey; whitherto we attended him, it being very near Dinner Time.



CHAP. VII.

Lord G—r—d steals the Night with Biddy. Their Conflict. She follows him to Town. Meet daily. Travel proposed to Lord G—r—d. Distressed thereat. Repent denying their Marriage; resolve to confess it. An Excess of Joy sinks them both; but recovered.

I LEFT their Lordships together, not being judged fit Company for the Son, in Presence of the Father, after what had already passed; so that retiring to my Chamber, my Children and I enjoyed ourselves, in such Manner, as the Perturbations of my Mind would best permit me.

I saw no more of Lord G—r—d till Bed-time: For the old Gentleman took Care to keep him as close to himself, as possible. At parting
with

with him for Bed, he enjoined him by no means to see me that Night; for he was certain, he said, my very Looks were contagious, and that though his Lordship was ever so ripe for parting with me, he disputed not, but if he admitted me to an Opportunity, my Artifices would cause a Retraction of, or at least a Wavering in his Resolution; but added, that as he purposed to take his Lordship to Town with him in the Morning, a few Weeks Absence would conciliate him to a Separation from me for ever; so that having, as he thought, engaged his Son to avoid me for that Night, he went to rest contentedly.

No sooner had his Lordship fairly laid the old Gentleman to repose, than like the most passionate Lover, he flew to my Chamber, where we stole the Night together.

Vain would be the Attempt, should I aim at a Description of the Hurricane

Hurricane of our Passions, till Morning; our whole Beings were absorbed, in a jarring Variety of Extasies, Doubts, Confusions, Fears, Hopes, Sighs, Tears, Joys, and Lamentations, as successive, as our Ideas were, of what was most likely to prove our future Fortune. The Expectation of a Separation in the Morning, chilled us so much, that neither the Heat of our Vows, or the Protestations of an everlasting Constancy, could add a living Warmth to our dejected Spirits, or could we utter ourselves so significantly as we would, in Token of our never ending Affection. Every Surmise, every Imagination, beneficial, or disadvantageous to our future Prospects, was brought to Account, canvassed, and scrutinized, with the nicest Exactitude; but the greatest Difficulty we both laboured under was, how we should steal future, unnoticed Meetings, with each other.

We

We came to a Resolution, not to dispose of our Furniture, it being for the most Part new; but that I should, with all convenient Speed, follow his Lordship to *London*, (having first dismissed all our Servants, and cleared off every thing in the Country) and there taking an House in some retired Street, should settle myself and Children, and inform his Lordship of my Situation, as he then directed me. As to whatever would in future be necessary, we deferred all Considerations of that, till we should meet in *London*.

My dear Lord left me all the Money he had in the Country, with unlimited Orders upon his Banker, for whatever I should draw for; but now, the Day beginning to peep through our Curtains, we took such a solemn Farewel at Parting, as if we had never more been to meet on Earth again; our very Souls issuing, and at each Embrace, commixing:

no *The HISTORY of*

mixing: For Lord *G—r—d* dreaded lying too long, lest his Father, who was noted for an early Riser, might chance to surprize us together, which could not have failed, of rendering all our future Professions suspectable by him.

But what we were both the most concerned at was, lest the Earl should make up Matters with Lord *C—d—n*, or possibly, have some other Match in his View for Lord *G—r—d*; in either of which Cases, what we had ran so many Hazards to avoid, would again be obtruded upon us.

The Earl and his Son left the Country that Morning, and in few Days after, having adjusted all my Affairs, to my best Satisfaction, I followed them; when having taken an House in the Parish of *St. Martin's*, I sent for my Goods, and settled myself under the best Accommodation, that my then Circumstances would admit of.

My

My next Concern was, (as had already been concerted between us) to inform his Lordship of my Situation, which I did by Letter, directed as he had dictated to me. Whereupon, he paid me a Visit the next Morning: And now, we began again to enjoy ourselves once more, like reasonable Creatures: For saving that his Lordship could but seldom be absent all Night from his Father's, without subjecting himself to Suspicion, we had all the Latitude of Intercourse by Day, that was requisite; and thus our Time passed, agreeably enough, for almost twelve Months.

The Earl had not, we may suppose, been idle all this Time, as to the great Work he had in Hand, of procuring an Alliance for his Son, suitable to his own aspiring Notions; but notwithstanding the numberless Attempts he had made, his Projects had proved all abortive.

As

As for my dear Lord himself, he was wholly out of the Case; nor was he to have been in the least consulted in the Affair, till the Money Matters were brought to Perfection; and then, for Form-sake, he was to have been so desperately smitten with the Lady, that it would have been necessary to have hurried on the Wedding, lest he should have been incapable of surviving the least Delay; but, as I said before, every Scheme failing, and the Earl suspecting, that his Son's Character having been somewhat blown in the Affair of Lady Mary, might occasion the Unsuccessfulness of his Negotiations; he told him, that as it would be time enough for him to think of Marriage, he had Thoughts of sending him to travel, for a few Years; being persuaded, he would inspect foreign Parts far more advantageously at his Age, than had he sent him a raw Lad, just from School. He told him also that he had

had provided him a Companion, and that he must be prepared in fourteen days at farthest.

It is scarce to be conceived what a Blow was hereby given to Lord G--r--d, who had delighted himself with the Hopes of his Father's despairing to find a proper Match for him; and so long as he could promise himself so frequent Opportunities of my Company as he then enjoyed, he concerned himself but little at the Caution he was obliged to use for obtaining them: But this travelling Scheme, as it would disconcert all our Measures at once, so it would occasion a Separation between us, more insupportable than Death itself.

The dismal Sentence had no sooner rang in his Lordship's Ears, than he bore the melancholy Tiding to me, and as was usual between us, in Cases of similar Nature, we closed in Consultation, to counteract, if possible, the Severity of our Doom; but

but all our Politicks proved too shallow for starting the least material Objection to it.

We again began to lament our first Error, in the Denial of our Marriage; and also the persisting in it a second time, when so fair an Occasion had presented for adhering to it, as when the Earl found us together in *Hertfordshire*: For we concluded, that had we but resolutely persisted in the Truth, the Certainty of our Case being irremediable, would either have reconciled the Earl to us, or at once have cast us out of his Protection; which latter, could not have proved so dreadful to us, even in its extremest Latitude, as the perpetual Inquietudes we suffered, from the Uncertainty of our Affairs, upon every capricious Turn of the old Gentleman's Temper.

Lord *G--r--d*, not to mention my own Concern, which I stifled as far as possible, was so distressed in his Mind, that he had resolved with himself,

himself, rather to have faced his Father's Fury, by cancelling his first Fallacy, and exposing the naked Truth to him, than to have subsisted in such perpetual Uneasiness ; but an inherent filial Awe, which from the Moroseness of the Earl's Temper, he had from his Cradle been overborne with, as constantly gave a Check to every Notion that he could but conceive would irritate his Father.

The Preparations for his Journey were carried on by the Earl with all Alacrity, and an Agreement had been made for his Passage ; nay the time for his Embarkation was reduced to the narrow Limits of two Days ; nor was I destitute of the Hope of following him, as had been concerted between us, so soon as he should have given me notice of its Conveniency ; but till he should so inform me of it, the Reflection of leaving me and his Children behind him, whilst himself should be pursuing a Course the most repugnant

to his own Nature, and that in foreign Parts too, where we could have no speedy and regular Accounts of each other, reduced him to such Melancholy, as to assure me, that as all which was intrinsically of Value to him in Life, were myself and Children, he having sufficient Estate to maintain us above Want, though not in the Affluence an Addition of his Father's Possessions would enable him to do, he was determined to break measures with his Father, and decline his Voyage; for that no Displeasure of a Parent could afford him equal Torment with that of leaving us behind him.

This having been his Topic for the whole Night (he having spent it with me) he arose, fully prepared for freeing himself that very Morning from his Shackles, as he expressed himself, which galled him to the very Soul.

I must confess, I dreaded the Consequences of this Resolution, tho' he seem-

seeming so determinately bent upon that Way of Proceeding, I did not interpose to prevent it. He had no sooner left me, than the Expectation of what was to succeed, sent me mourning to my Closet, where, secluded from my Family, I kept a solemn Fast for the Remainder of the Day, which I wholly spent in Prayer, and weeping, for the Success of my dear Lord's Enterprize; nor should I have forsaken my Retreat for the ensuing Night, had I not towards Evening, been roused by the Voice of my dear Lord at the Door, calling to me.

My Conjecture of the Report he would make to me, of what had passed at his Father's, had suspended me so between Hope and Fear, that I had scarce Power to open the Door to him; till my Heart, (ever ready to receive him, on what Errand soever) inspiring me with Resolution, I wiped off my Tears, that they might not augment his
Sor-

Sorrow, and then let him in. His Lordship then, hastily seizing me in his Arms, and clasping me, under violent Emotions: O *Biddy*, my dearest Life, said he, and would have proceeded; but the Passions of his Soul obstructing his Delivery, I found him by Degrees, sinking, as unable longer to support himself; I had the presence of Mind to lay hold of him, and seat him, before he fell, on a Couch which stood almost behind us; when he was by that Time quite motionless, and in my Opinion, lifeless too, the Sight of which, rendered my Aid wholly useless to him; but running to the Stairs for Help, I had Power only to issue one violent Scream, before myself was reduced to his Lordship's Condition.

The Servants all collected about me immediately, to enquire into the Cause of my Discomposure; but finding me past the Power of telling them, my Maids, inexpressibly

preffibly fhocked at my Cataftrophe, fnatched me up in their Arms, and moved off with me, with intent to lay me upon one of the Squabs in my Dreffing-Room; but what a Scene beheld they there, in their Lord, already occupying the other, and in their Apprehenfions, ftone dead too.

The Family was in fuch a Confufion, each running for what ſhe could think beneficial, that fifty different Applications were employed for our Recovery, without the leaſt Effect, before my own Footman had brought up my Apothecary to us, who being himſelf at a Loſs, on the firſt View of our Condition, in what manner to proceed with us, ſent forthwith for a Phyſician from the next Street, a Man of conſiderable Eminence in his Profeſſion, who giving inſtant Orders for a Surgeon, gave Direction for opening a Vein in each of us; when perceiving us to bleed freely, he conceived

ceived that we were out of Danger: For this, giving fresh Motion to our Blood, our languid Spirits soon gave Tokens of a Return to their proper Functions, though very deliberately for some Time.

I very well remember, that, upon the first Disclosure of my Eyes, under a Recollection of my Existence, I was most amazingly struck at the group of Figures that then surrounded me; nor could I soon recover my Recollection, of either where I was, or of what could have occasioned the Concourse of Persons who then seemed so busily engaged about me. My Arm was not yet tied up from Bleeding, but who the Doctor or Surgeon was, I was most at a Loss to find out. As for the Apothecary, he having before attended me, my first Question was to him, after I had recovered my Voice, to be informed what had been the Matter? why I had been thus attended? and where was my
dear

dear Husband? He replied, that I had been in an hystERIC Fit, and that his Lordship also was reviving; then making way, by transposing at least a dozen Fellows and Wenches who stood between us, so thick that they could hardly stir by each other, I perceived my dear Lord also returning to his vital Functions; but, as yet, scarce able to reply, better he hoped, to my Enquiry after his Health.

My Spirits, and with them my Strength, recurring, much more speedily than his Lordship's, no sooner was I capable of sitting upright, than the Doctor placed himself on the Couch at my Right-hand; and, feeling my Pulse, pronounced the worst to be over; so that I dismissed all our useless Attendants, and only retained my own Women with me, and in about a Quarter of an Hour more, both his Lordship and I being able to walk a little, we permitted

the Doctor and Surgeon to depart with their Fees, but detained the Apothecary for some time longer, to whom we are obliged, for an Account of what Condition he had first found us in.

He said, that upon his Arrival, we were both as much sunk in Spirits as could well be conceived ; but our Cases being so similar, and both at the same Instant too, his first Enquiry was, into what we had eaten or drank, confessing his Suspicion, that our Disorders had arisen from something pernicious in our Food ; but being able to gain no Satisfaction therein, he then imagined they must have proceeded from the sudden Shock of some adverse Occurrence, that had so equally affected us both.

That in so critical a Point, being unwilling to act without further Advice, he had called in the Physician, who, proposing Phlebotomy, had sent for the Surgeon. He was very glad, he said, to see us both in so
fine

fine a way ; but as it was still necessary that our Spirits should be kept up, he would send each of us a Cordial Julep for that Purpose.





C H A P. VIII.

Lord G--r--d discovers that his Travel is laid aside. His Inquietude. Another Match proposed for Lord G--r--d. His Lordship's Opposition. Owns his Marriage to Biddy. Fury of the Earl.

HAVING now parted from all the Gentlemen of the Faculty, I was fearful of making too early an Inquisition into the Occasion of his Lordship's Discomposure, lest his Relation of the News I expected might work so forcibly upon us both, as to cause a Relapse : For what less than some insupportable Shock to our Affairs, could have had so violent an Effect upon his Lordship !

Whilst I was forming to myself numberless Conjectures of what it might be, his Lordship, with a smiling

8

smiling Air, accosting me, *Biddy*, said he, we are still to be happy, though I am ignorant of its Continuance; be it our Business, therefore, to improve the Opportunity. Good, my Lord! as how? demanded I; for my Mind has strangely forboded, ever since your Lordship's Return, that the most wretched of Fates attended us both.

My Love! said his Lordship, my Journey is laid aside. But what, my dear Lord, said I, is ordained in the Place of it, that should have occasioned your Lordship's so late Disorder? O *Biddy*, said he, my Heart was so joyous, as I offered at a Disclosure of that felicitous Turn to thee, that a Thought of the Pleasure you would receive it with, was so insupportable, as to obstruct all further Display of my vital Faculties.

I assured him of the Delight I received from this Report; but was not without my Fears, that this Re-

vocation of his Father's Sentence, would but prove like a Lightning before Death, and fore-run some severer Event than that of his Travels; but let it be what it would, it might, probably, not be so precipitate an Overthrow to us, as an instant Separation; and asked him, if he could frame a Guess what it might be?

His Lordship replied, that his Father had not assigned the least Reason for this Alteration of his Will; but that coming home (as he had heard) later than usual the last Night, he had enquired for him, presently after he was stirring that Morning; but his Lordship knowing nothing of it till after Dinner, had been prevented seeing his Father, as he had intended (by an old Acquaintance with whom he had dined) till Afternoon; when almost the first Words his Father saluted him with were, Son, I would have you lay aside all further Thoughts of travelling,

ling, for I shall otherwise dispose of you. His Lordship added, that his Heart almost bounded through his Side at the News, and that he forthwith flew to inform me of it; for, *Biddy*, said he, a Moment gained with thee, is a Compensation for an Age of Woe.

We could not say what might have occasioned the Change; but I could not surmise, but it must have arisen from some new Object, that the Earl had selected, as a Wife for his Lordship, and so I told him. Heaven forbid! said he; but I know not what is the Matter with me, I shall have no solid Peace of Mind till I have revealed our Marriage to my Father. I have, my Dear, added he, ten times the Awe and Dread upon me in my Father's Presence, whilst I act under Cover thus (though the End should answer my Purposes ever so well) that I should have, were he but apprized of the whole Truth. I falter, I blush, I

hesitate, and am under such Confusion and Distress, whenever we confer together, that rather than endure it longer, whenever he again hints at Matrimony to me, I am resolved to lay all open to him, let the Consequence prove what it will.

I live with thee here, my Dear, added he, more like a Criminal than an Husband; my Children scarce receive me as a Father, nor my Servants for a Master; I am debarred all Freedom and Interview with my Friends in my own House; the Reflection upon which so consumes my Relish for Life, that I can no longer bear it. I therefore must, and will, seize the very first Occasion that presents, for disburdening my Mind, and will, at all Events, stand the Brunt of it.

It was not in my Power to condemn his Lordship's Sentiments; but, from my Heart, was grieved we had ever combined together, by so notorious an Untruth, to impose
upon

upon him: For had we but at first persisted in the Truth, though our future Dependences might have been crossed by it, yet our Enjoyment of our own, under prudent Oeconomy, had been lasting and happy to us: For as neither his Lordship or I were addicted to the least Extravagance, so an unrestrained Intercourse with each other, would have over-compens'd us for every Difficulty we might otherwise have subjected ourselves to: But for us to live in almost a State of Exile from each other, and to condescend to Stealth and Artifice for every Enjoyment of each other's Society, was what pierced our very Souls, though I had fixed it as my Principle, not to be the first Complainant.

Three Days more had scarce passed, before the Earl explained himself to his Lordship, upon his new Disposition of him, by ordering him to pay his Addresses to Lady *Fanny S--d--y*; for that he designed

her for his Daughter-in-law, at the same time acquainting him, that she had been apprized of his Visit by her Father, and that he would be well received by her.

His Lordship making no manner of Reply to this, but standing mute, and in a musing Posture, ready to have promulged our Marriage; What? said his Father, is there no Gratitude due to a Parent's Concern, in procuring you an Heiress with the vast Possessions she must enjoy, at the Earl's Death?

If you *young* Fellows are blind to your own Interests, you must not believe that we *old* ones are so too. Will not such an Alliance, think you, redound to the Honor and Emolument of our whole Posterity? Why, Sirrah! wert thou but endued with my active Genius, what an immense Estate might we not leave to our Descendants? But the Sluggishness of thy Principles, would rather subvert, than elevate their Grandeur.

Is

Is there no Gratitude, I say, due to all my Cares for your Advancement?

His Lordship, who now looked upon the present time as the luckiest Opportunity for retracting his past Error, by undeceiving his Father, was upon the Point of explaining himself; when the Dread of his Father's Anger over-powering him, it still adhered to his Tongue, beyond his utmost Ability to disengage it. Shuffling off then, a direct Answer, his Lordship replied, that from the slender Knowledge he had of that Lady, he should be under great Difficulty in making his Advances so vigorously, as his Honor seemed to expect: For that it would in his Opinion, seem strangely out of Character to him, to appear as a Suitor to a Lady, with whom he had never in his Life exchanged a single Syllable, or had ever seen, save at Court, or at the Play-house.

That

That in such a Case, indeed, she might conceive of him, that her Riches had smitten him; but as he was so far in the dark as to her Speech, Behaviour, and personal Endowments, he apprehended, that if at all Events, neither of their Choice was to be consulted in the Affair, it might be full soon enough for them to meet, for the first Time, at the Nuptial Ceremony.

His Lordship declared, that had he studied a Reply to his Father, he could not have proceeded so smartly; but that having once divested himself of Restraint, there seemed so natural a Connexion in what he had, with what he intended to offer, that being highly irritated, he could scarce stop without saying much more.

He observed his Father's Countenance to cloud over prodigiously, and his Lip to fall exceedingly, (than which no Token could be a surer Prognostick of his rising Fury)
but

but having exerted himself so much beyond what he had ever before attempted, and imagining himself to have far the better End of the Argument, he took Courage, and in a sort of Triumph, waited the old Gentleman's Resentment; who having roused up his Choler, even almost to the Obstruction of his vocal Organs, at length began with, Why have I ever been cursed with Children? To what End have all my Views in Life tended, but to the ennobling, and enriching, a mean degenerate Scoundrel, unworthy of transmitting my Name and Titles, to Posterity?

Have I not, at the Expence of my Bodily-health, and Vital-spirits, been scores of Years turmoiling myself, to accumulate an Estate, a Title, and Family, for you, Sirrah? and am I not well requited at last, think you?

I would not be induced to esteem thy Mother other than an honest
Wo-

Woman, though thy Manners would banish the Notion of it: For that thou hast a Drop of my Blood in thy Veins I most shrewdly suspect, by thy Actions. — Did I vainly divest myself of ten thousand Pounds, in the Purchase of a Title, only to transmit it to thee? — Why married I Lady *Betty G* — s? — Only to amass a Competency for thee: — But I have settled much of my own upon her Children already, and though she reserved all her Wealth to her own Disposal, yet I having had the Address to prevent her making any such, that is all now fallen into my Hands: So that, Scoundrel, added he, had not your Great-Uncle left you something, you, and your Whore, whom I suppose you still correspond with, should perish together for me, I can promise you?

O! the Stupidity of that old doating Fool, not to have left his Estate to me! I might then have had

had the Government of my own Child.—But that is your all.—You shall be the Earl of B——th, with three thousand Pounds a-year; much good may it do you.—Hark ye, Spark, I have other Children for my Estate, who, I hope, will better deserve it, or they shall starve without it.

Why was I born to be thus wretched! added he--What a Name shall I leave behind me, in thee and thy beggarly Issue!--The Thought distracts me.—Have you yet recollected yourself?—Are you repentant for what you have done? Do you resolve to prosecute my Measures?—Here, added he, take this Key; open my Scrutoir.----Look over the Titles of those Papers, and bring me my Will.---There, you shall see what an indulgent Father I would have proved to you by Inclination, and then for your Disobedience to my Commands, you shall see me burn that Instrument, which
would

would have bestowed such Wealth upon you.—Oh ! this World is no resting Place for me !

His Lordship being now peremptory in his Resolves, of not truckling an Ace to his Father, was the less anxious what became of the Will ; though upon producing it, the Earl read it aloud to him ; whereby it appeared, that he had given to his Lordship, all the Mortgages, and Money Securities, which had been his late Wife's, the Lady *Betty G*——s, amounting as he then said, to an hundred and forty thousand Pounds ; besides a real Estate, of thirteen thousand Pounds a-year.—Now, Son, said he, (very coolly) shall you this Day, according to my Pleasure, pay your first Court to Lady *Fanny*, or the whole of what I have named to you, shall be distributed to my younger Children.

My dear Lord replied, that it was with the utmost Regret, he should

should be obliged, in any Degree, to counteract his Lordship's Request; but begged him to consider, the purposed End of all his Pursuits, not as directed to his Lordship's Happiness, but to his own: For that they were instituted, before his Lordship had a Being; and then, that his Lordship should prove the next in Succession to him, was so far from his Father's Choice, that as to him, it was wholly accidental. That as to his Riches, by what Means they were obtained, himself best knew, but that they were accumulated for his Lordship's Sake, he absolutely denied; for that had they so been, his Father would have gloried, in rendering them beneficial to him, but the direct contrary appeared, from every Step he had yet taken with him; nor could his Honors have been procured with other View than his own Gratification, by raising him a Family, and Name, in his own Posterity;

sterity; for had these, singly, or conjointly, regarded his Lordship only, what would it be to his Father, whether he was the richest or poorest of Earls, in case he was but one of the happiest: From all which, his Lordship added, that it was apparent to him, that his Father only sought a Name for himself, at the Head of a succeeding Generation of Nobles, and that too, at the Expence of his Lordship's future Tranquillity.

Sir, added his Lordship, as I have my own Inclination to gratify, as well as you have had yours before me, I am from hence-forth determined, not to sacrifice my every future Comfort, to the most ample Acquisitions that can accompany the Loss of them.—I have only to request your Forgiveness for one Error in my Conduct, with which, could I not reproach myself, I would hereafter, to the best of my Capacity, obey every of your succeeding Com-

Commands, so far as legally, and conscientiously I might, there lying nothing so uneasy on my Mind, as that.

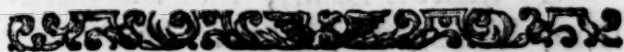
As to the Fortune you have given me by your Will, if it shall prove your Pleasure to confirm that Benefaction, I shall ever acknowledge your Bounty; if not, I will never repine at it.

The Earl then demanded, of what Error his Lordship craved Forgiveness; for having engaged to submit to his Pleasure in all Things, he would strive to forgive, and forget it. Sir, replied my dear Lord, it is the having imposed an Untruth upon you, in the Denial of my Marriage with *Biddy Farmer*; whereas she actually is my Wife, and such an one, as I must henceforward boast of, in the Face of the whole World.

The Earl, though he was then under Apprehensions of an approaching Fit of the Gout, and in
no

no little Pain with it, starting from his Chair, was making with all Haste to his Sword, from which, and divers other symptomatick Tokens of an implacable Fury, his Lordship judging his Person but insecure in his Presence, took to his Heels, and clapping the Door after him, made the speediest Way that he could, home to me.





CHAP. IX.

Lord G—r—d and Biddy appear publickly. He dines with the Earl. Sends for his Children. Don't return at Night. Biddy's Horror. No Intelligence of them at the Earl's. Biddy follows to the Earl's. Her Reception there.

HIS Lordship had not, for many Months, exhibited so gay a Countenance, as he appeared with upon his Return from his Father; which highly delighting me, I could not but crave a Share in his Satisfaction: For though I bore up with chearful Covering oftentimes, it is not to be imagined, but I must conceal an heavy Heart, when I reflected upon the Sufferings my dear Lord was daily exposed to for my Sake,

My

My dearest *Biddy*, said his Lordship, kissing me, I am Conqueror, I am Conqueror. I have this Day published our Marriage to my Father, and to prevent all Possibility of Retraction, I am resolved to take you and *Dicky* with me to the Play to-night, where you shall appear as my Lady, and *Dicky* as my Son, that all the Town may be satisfied, any further Match-making for me can be of no Effect.

I am, my Dear, all Joy and Gladness; all Life and Spirits, added he, and may fairly call this, the first happy Day I have seen, since I first equivocated with my Father: For I am now perfectly easy as to all that can befall me, and shall return no more to my Father's.

I told him, that nothing could more joyfully affect me, than these Expressions of his Satisfaction; but from his last Words, I could but collect, that all was not right between him and his Father. He

re-

replied it was not, and that it was a Mercy I had ever seen him alive again; for that if he had not instantly made his Escape, he verily believed his Father would have stabbed him. He then gave me a particular Detail of what had passed on both Sides, and how he had come off at last.

He appeared that Evening at the Play, daily visited about in the Chariot, and received Company at our own House, and purposely frequented every Place of public Resort, that no further Doubt of our Marriage might remain with any one: But I could not in all this Time, since I had been in Town, gain the least Intelligence of what was become of my Mother Mrs. *Thomas*; for I longed, if possible, to have been some way beneficial to her, as my Station would then have admitted of it, in case she had stood in need of my Assistance.

Some

Some Weeks had now passed, since we had seen or heard any thing from the Earl; nor gave we ourselves the least Concern about it, not building our Hopes upon any future Advantage to us from that Quarter, till, as we were sitting at Breakfast one Morning, we received a Message by his Servant, which contained an Invitation of his Lordship to Dinner with him that Day.

It was near an Hour before we could resolve upon an Answer to this unexpected Invitation; for that, as well his Lordship as myself, had infinite displeasing Conjectures, relative to the Views his Father might have in this Invitation; nor could we, at length, reduce them into any thing beneficial to us.

His Lordship could with no colourable Pretence, as we both thought, avoid so civil a Request from a Father; nor could he trust himself into his Company, without dangerous Reflections on what might
have

have proved the Consequence of their last Interview, had he not so abruptly left him. On the other hand, should he decline this seeming friendly Summons, it might afford a just Pretence for his disinheriting him, as his Father, no doubt, would insinuate his Intent of a Reconciliation on his Part, which his Lordship had declined to accept of.

After numberless Reasonings therefore, pro and con, his Lordship presented his humblest Duty to his Father, and would do himself the Honour of waiting upon him. I must confess, that had it been solely my Case (from the known Implacability of the Earl's Temper) I would sooner have starved upon my own Income, and in my own Innocence, than I would have subjected myself to his Machinations. However, his Lordship resuming his late Composure, took leave of me very pleasantly, and drove to his Father's, assuring me, that unless he met with

the Reception he hoped for there, and the direct contrary to that at their last Meeting, his Stay would be very short with him.

His Lordship had not left me more than an Hour before his Chariot returned, with a Note under his Hand for me, in the following Words :

My dearest Biddy,

ALL will go well, my Father relents, and condemns his hard Usage of us. He is all Impatience for embracing the Children. Delay not to send them instantly to

Your ever affectionate

R—— G——.

What a grateful Prospect my Eyes received from this Writing ! I even flew to obey my dear Lord's Orders, and having dressed them and their Maid as elegantly as possible, I dispatched them accordingly, and in about half an Hour more, the Maid
re-

returned with the Chariot, giving me an Account of the gracious Reception they met with from their Grand Papa.

I know not how to account for it, but most certain it is to me, that our good or evil Genius, taking Possession of our Souls, inspire us frequently with a Sense of approaching Destiny, before itself appears in Action to us: For I was never occupied by such a Set of gloomy Ideas in my whole Life, rushing through my Fancy, upon any prior Occasion whatsoever, as from the Moment I had sent away my Children; nor could all the Efforts I made for their Removal, in the least vary their Misfortunes, or prevent their Succession or Continuance.

I would fain have persuaded myself, that this was really a parental Care of the Earl's, in order to have signified his Approbation of, or at least his Submission to, our Junction, and that their Meeting would have

proved the Dawn of a thorough Reconciliation between them, as, most undoubtedly from his Letter to me, my dear Lord expected it would have been. Nay, even from my soundest Judgment, formed upon my own Reasonings, I could not but conceive that I had sufficient Foundation for my Conclusion : But my Arguments were no sooner framed, than an involuntary Impulse, contrary to my clearest Deductions, and in spite of the Convictions of my own Heart, would hurry me down the forlorn Stream of foulest Despair, till sunk into an Abyfs of Horror, I was scarce able to emerge from it again.

The whole Day having passed in this confused Manner, as Night drew on, my Fears began to take a more sensible Turn, lest some inveterate Catastrophe should have befallen my dear Lord and Children. The Clock had now struck twelve,
and

and I had neither seen or heard from them.

I lingered on the time till two, subject still to fresh Suggestions, momentarily arising, in my distressed Imagination, which had, by this time, roused such an Hurricane in my Breast, that no longer capable of proceeding deliberately in my Reflections, my several Passions contending each for the Mastery, had so occupied and alarmed the Stage of Reason, as to have thrown every Faculty into an Uproar.

I raved, tore my Hair, smote my Breast, and calling every Servant in the Family about me, I sent one here, another there, pointed to them to behold their murdered Lord, whose pallid Corpse I verily thought I beheld, at every point of my View, all smeared with Blood, and ghastly, with yet flowing Wounds; so that my whole Thoughts, Words, and Actions, were alike incoherent, and

but one Complication of Inconsistencies and wild Distraction.

Daylight appeared, but with it, introduced not what my fluttered Soul longed after, my ever dearest Husband and Children. I sent my Footman to the Earl's for Intelligence; but the sole Answer to be obtained was, that his Lordship left his Father soon after Dinner, in Company with two Gentlemen who were Strangers, since which, he had not returned to his Father's. That the Children were sent upon an Airing to *Hyde-Park*, in the Earl's Coach, which afterwards returning without them, the Servants supposed they had been set down at home.

This dark Account of my Family increased the Horror of my former dismal Apprehensions, almost to Desperation. My Lord missing, and my Children lost, were insupportable Afflictions to me. I ran to my Dressing-room, where snatching up such
Things

Things as next presented, I dressed myself, ordered the Chariot to the Door, and in the Height of my Calamity, posted away to Lord B—n's.

I had, during my going thither, composed myself in the best Manner my conflicting Spirits would permit me, that, if possible, I might keep clear of all Extravagance in the Earl's Presence; but I might have spared myself that Caution; for, upon hearing who I was, he refused seeing me, or even admitting me within the House.

I was then driven to such an insufferable Dilemma, not knowing how to behave, that having wept standing, till my Legs were ready to double under me with Fatigue, I fate me down upon the Steps of the House, within the Court-yard, where my Sorrow redoubling upon me, I made the whole Court ring with my unrestrained Lamentations, for a full Hour, before a Soul of the

Family dared to exchange a single Word with me, though most of them had, at times, in that Interval, passed by me.

My Wailings and Outcries had at length collected a Mob before the Door, which the Earl observing to increase, and dreading the Scandal that would redound to him, when it should come to be known who I was, he ordered me to be conducted into the House; but without an Insight into my dear Husband's Fate, the Street itself had been as agreeable a Seat to me as the very best in his Lordship's Mansion.

So soon as the Crowd, which my Cries had gathered without Doors, was dispersed, the Earl sent Orders for my Dismission; but I refused to stir till I had seen him. This he being informed of, ordered Violence to be used with me, to compel me from thence; when again, my Shrieks on that Occasion being heard
through

through the whole Neighbourhood, and the Passengers again stopping before the Gate, I was returned to the House, and replaced in my former Situation.





CHAP. X.

Biddy admitted to the Earl. Their Discourse. Wants her to part with her Husband. Second Interview with the Earl. Articles for parting proposed to her. Rejected. Threatens to procure a Divorce. Stringer witnesses against Biddy. As does Esther. Biddy despises them.

I HAD scarce compos'd myself after my Return, before the Earl descending, order'd me into the Parlour to him, whom I had no sooner beheld, than I prostrated myself before him, and begged him to give me Knowledge of my Husband, and my Children. Woman! said he, how know I who your Husband is? No! my Lord, replied I, not know your own Son, Lord G—r—d? You are a filthy Strumpet,

pet, said his Lordship. My Son your Husband! Yes, my Lord, replied I, my loving, true, and lawful Husband. Neither can I now conceive him under less Horror and Amazement at your present Proceedings with him, than I myself am; I am assured you have deprived him of his Liberty of returning to me, or he would never, of his own Accord, have attempted this unreasonable Elopement from me; therefore, dear my Lord, as yourself will one Day hope for Mercy, extend it to a poor distracted Woman, who now craves it of you.

O! my Lord, added I, conceive but yourself in my Condition. You have twice been married, and surely, at some Time, at least, have been sensible of true Love, and Affection. Consider but your dear Wife, as ravished from your Arms, by Treachery, by Violence, unable to return to you, and labouring with Pangs worse than Death, if worse
 • can

can be, under a forced Privation of you, her Husband : The same, Sir, must now be the Portion of your own Son, and your own Vexation, mine. I speak it not from Vanity, but from a Sense of its Subsistence in Lord G—r—d, equally with myself; then not for my Sake, but for his, Sir, compassionate him, and me, in him.

Then for my Children, Sir, they cannot have offended you; O! deliver them, good my Lord, to their abandoned Mother, nor rack their tender Souls, by so remorseless a Separation from her!

Well! said the Earl, and now I have had the Patience to attend that Tongue of yours to the Conclusion of its Harangue, so pathetically delivered, as you think; what tends it all to, but to demonstrate its Owner to be the infamous Creature I have ever taken her for?

Do you imagine, that this artificial Cant, and Common-place Argument,

ment, will have the least Effect on me?—It shames me, that my Son should have proved himself the puny Rascal, to have ever been captivated by this bombast Stuff of yours; but Mistress, you have no Green-head to deal with in me. I have been used to your lofty Rifings, and sweet Cadences, with your good my Lords, dear my Lords, Love, and Affection, till I am sick of them. I tell thee, Woman, thou art none of my Son's Wife, or ever shall be. He has done with you; and as for your Children, they will never trouble you more: So that as you are now but one in Family, you may easily provide for yourself; nor shall you ever see my Son more, till you have renounced all Claim to him, as he already has to you.

As he already has to me, my Lord, I am prepared to do it; but durst your Lordship put it upon that Issue? said I; pardon me for saying so, I am not so weak as to credit
you,

you, and therefore, will venture my whole future Happiness, which can only center in Lord G—r—d, my legal Husband, upon that Story; nay, I will in the most solemn and sacred Manner, disclaim all future Pretensions to him, if Face to Face, he shall voluntarily relinquish me.

O! the designing Hypocrite! said the Earl, what an Opinion hast thou of thy own Excellencies! What? thinkest thou to charm him into an Agreement with thy Sentiments, by thy deceitful Allurements? No, no, you mistake your Man. I tell thee again, he has deserted thee; denies his Marriage, nor will he ever behold thy deluding Face more. —Ay, ay, whimper, do, (for I cried ready to break my Heart) Crocodile; give yourself Airs, and cast your Limbs into preposterous Attitudes; grow frantick, do, and follow your proper Calling. It is the End of most of your Stamp, when they sink from
high.

high Keeping, into their primitive Nothing, they range as Vagabonds about the World, under Pretence of Distraction, for Love.

What am I reduced to ! thinks I, (for I could then have torn the Tongue from his abusive Throat, in the Rage he had advanced me to) when, as recollecting himself a little, I must own, added he, I look upon your Case with some Compassion, however ; and since my Son has abandoned you, if you will also publicly disavow him for your Husband, and desist from persecuting him with your Wiles, I have still so much Humanity in me, as to allow you fifty Pounds a-year for your Life. Let me advise you to live honestly, and that will prove a very pretty Provision for you.

I have many a Time since wondered, how it was possible for me to bear up, under such a Torrent of Calamity, as then surrounded me ; but my Innocence still kept me

me on float, and at the Time I am now speaking of, especially, I must have been more than naturally assisted, not only in contemning his Threats, but in dismissing his Offers, with all due Indignation. Then patiently waiting the Event, I retired to my own House.

I could not conceive, that the old Gentleman's Inveteracy against me, could extend to the depriving an own Son of his Life, for adhering to me : For I doubted not his being assured of my being Lord *G—r—d's* Wife, and consequently, of the Legitimacy of my Children ; nor was I under much Fear, after I had reflected for a while, but that I should by some Means or other hear from his Lordship, the first Opportunity he could gain for the Purpose: For I was so thoroughly convinced of his Integrity to me, as to be certain, that mere Violence alone could restrain him from it, should he be prevented coming himself

self to me; and in these Sentiments I remained, for at least ten Days.

About the Expiration of that Period, the Earl sent for me to his House. Madam, said he, when last I saw you, your Tears had such an Effect upon me, that I made you an Offer of fifty Pounds a-year for your Life; but your insisting that you was my Daughter-in-law, I could not think of separating you absolutely from your Husband, (as now I find he is) by my Compulsion, merely, whilst he should believe your Integrity to him as a Wife, would stand unimpeached; but I have now to inform you, of my Son's earnest Request, that I should for him, prosecute you for Adultery, and sue you to a Divorce from him. I should think, added he, that Matters had better be accommodated between you, and as it will save Expence on both Sides, and an Exposure on a public Stage; here, said he, (giving me a Parchment

ment into my Hand) sign this Article, and I will still be so noble to you, as to adhere to the Promise I lately made you.

What am I to do with this, Sir? said I. Only to sign it, replied he; for you will receive no further Maintenance from my Son, and may come upon the Parish for Alms, but for my Pity to you.

His Lordship, observing that I was beginning to read it; What use will it be of, said he, for you to peruse it? You are no Judge of Writings. You need not fear its being properly drawn for the Purpose; sign it, I say, sign it.

Sir, replied I, your Honor need no more fear my reading it, (for it was wrote in a Character, that would have puzzled a Decypherer) than I need fear its Propriety; but give me leave to protest to your Lordship, that it shall never be graced with my Hand to it.—No, Sir, I have already received too
many

many Tokens of your Kindness to me, to suspect your present Veracity: I doubt not its being as proper for your Purpose, as improper for mine; but let me add, Sir, that it is not the least Alleviation of my Distress, that I have it, as I can plainly descry, as palpably in my Power to increase your Torment, or more, than you can mine.

You have a Son, Sir, and you aim at transmitting, through him, an Honor you have bartered for, and an Estate that may redound to your future Glory, at the Head of his Posterity; but let me tell you, Sir, the Blood of an Earl may descend as untainted through my Issue, as that of the most opulent Dutchess in the Land.

Your Son, Sir, far from an Inheritor of your Principles, with your Blood, disdains your Titles as much as your Maxims; and but that your Patent annexes those to your Heir-male, would with equal Pleasure
relin-

relinquish them as yourself obtained them ; neither values he your Estate farther than as a Support to your unwelcome Honors. — You dread the Thought of being stiled, when you are gone, the Father of a poor Family of Earls, left the World, which will never find Occasion to brand Lord G—r—d with the Character of a Waster, should suspect you of having been one, when they shall behold my Husband with the Title, without an Estate equivalent. How vain your Imaginations are, would be impertinent in me to urge, to a Man whose Cash and Ambition have ever been his darling Deities.

Your Lordship, added I, hath disintitled yourself to any Compliments from me. You see I am plain with you, my Sentiments are your Son's also, and ever will be so ; nor shall any oppressive Acts of yours, ever cause a Retraction in either of us. Had you esteemed your Son for his own Sake, you
would

would have valued his Comforts in Life, which, whatsoever you may urge to the contrary, all center in a virtuous Wife, and I am her. I despise your chimerical Adultery and Divorce; and though you are and must, and shall be, my Father-in-law, scorn to become your Pensioner, upon your own mean Conditions, or any other.

O! the pure Strain of an Harlot, said the Earl; virtuous Wife! Innocence itself! I'll warrant you, would but the World give Credit to you; but, as to your Adultery, my Son being now convinced of it, I having the Evidence at hand, living Testimony, more than one Eye-witness, those flighty Airs you may please to give yourself, in my private Parlour, will be of small Avail in a Court of Justice, where Matters are determined upon positive Evidence, without Regard to the Criminal's simple Plea of Innocence.

My

My Lord, said I, but for the Respect I bear to my Husband's Parent, I should be apt to reply, as this injurious Treatment of a virtuous Woman deserves ; but please your Fancy so long as you will, with the Deceit, I defy you to produce a single Instance of my Disloyalty to Lord G—r—d, in Thought, Word, or Act, except that one Oversight against his Honor, when, combining with him, I consented to disown our Marriage to you.

His Lordship then called in his Pensioner *Stringer* ; Mr. *Stringer*, said he, I call you to declare your Knowledge as to this virtuous Woman's Chastity. You have known her long. Hath she, to your Knowledge, ever prostituted herself to any Man, or hath she ever been a true Woman to her Husband ?

Stringer was not a little confounded at my Presence ; but covering it under the Reluctance wherewith he must expose a Lady, for whom he pro-

professed to have had a peculiar Esteem, replied, that far be it from him to glory in his Conquests over the Fair-sex, and so far, every Tendency to cast a Blemish over my Character, in particular, that he could well hope he might be excused from so unwelcome a Task as his Lordship had enjoined; but when his Lordship, before whom his Duty obliged him to act with Sincerity, thought fit to lay his Injunction upon him, every scrupulous Suggestion must give place to that, and his Lordship must be obeyed.

As to the main Question, he said, not to mention the several Acts of my Misbehaviour, which Fame only had informed him of, he should proceed to only what had fallen more immediately under his own Cognizance; though sorry he was that he must thereby cast a Slur upon his own Reputation, which no Consideration should have induced him to, less than his Lordship's Command;

mand ; but to speak the Truth ingenuously, himself had lain with me, by my own Appointment.

My Blood perfectly boiled in my Veins at Sight of that foul Ravisher ; but having heard his Tale, I could have stabbed him to the Heart, had I been Mistress of ought that would have reached it ; for he proceeded with such an undaunted Air of Truth in his Report, that had I not been conscious of my own Innocence, I could not, as a By-stander, have even suspected his Veracity.

This, I presume, Sir, said I, you would impose upon his Lordship as a Verity. Your Lordship already knows what Credit my Husband gives to it. Woman, replied the Earl, I also know, that Mr. *Stringer* was not then present when Lord *G--r--d* delivered himself ; but whatever my Son may have thought, I tell thee, he is now fully convinced of thy Falshood to him.

Turning

Turning then to *Stringer*, said I, Pray Sir, did we meet by Agreement in the Horsepond, and in the Dunghill too? Wretched *Stringer*! is it come to this? Surely thou hast not yet received sufficient from his Lordship's Bounty, to hazard thy Soul in his Quarrel. Poor Man! when thou hast answered this dirty Job, there will be an End of thy Perquisites.—His Lordship parts with no Cash unprofitably.

How dar'est thou, poor miserable Man! to curry Favour with any one, brave out a Lye thus plausibly? thou impudent Disguiser! Disguiser! said he; was it not at your own Request that I did it? lest accidentally his Lordship should return before we were stirring the next Day.

O Heavens! said I, dread you not sinking into the Earth quick, for this Falsity? Ay, ay, said the Earl, right Strumpet still; some Prodigy, ever some Prodigy, to clear

the Innocent, no doubt; but go on, go on, Mr. *Stringer*.

My Lord, said *Stringer*, I have done; but as this has happened to be denied by the Lady, which I must own I could not have suspected her to have been so hardened as to have attempted, I shall beg leave to call in another Evidence, in corroboration of what I have testified to your Lordship, lest, through her Audacity, your Lordship should be misguided to discredit me.

Who should this doughty witness be, but my former Maid *Esther*, who, dropping a Curt'sy, desired to know whether I would speak with her? ——— *Esther*, said I, you well know that you have proved yourself a base Creature to me; and was proceeding to have charged her as an Accomplice with *Stringer* in this intentional Debauch of my Person, when the Earl cut me short, by demanding my Silence, till *Esther* had finished her Tale; then calling
to

to her, Mrs. *Esther*, said he, what know you of Mr. *Stringer's* bedding with that Woman?

May it please your Lordship, said she, I would not for the World, by a single Step, exceed the real Truth. I cannot say that I saw them bedded; but it was so currently reported in the Family; and indeed, my Lord, I suspected some such thing to be in Agitation, when my Lady ordered me to deliver a Suit of my Night-clothes, or Night-gown, and Pettycoat, to Mr. *Stringer*.

With what a Face of Brags canst thou withstand this Testimony? said the Earl to me. My Lord, replied I, I have lived long enough to be fully ascertained, that when once a Villain has told a Lye, it is to no Purpose to enquire whether he is not ashamed of it: For had he but possessed the least Tincture of this in his Composition, he had avoided it: So that in Christian

Charity, I have only to pray for their Reformation, and in the mean time, to intreat you to cherish them, if you hope for any Benefit from them, or the next Bidder may employ them to impeach your Lordship.

Pray, Mr. *Stringer*, said I, was I passive, or was I turbulent upon the Occasion? Passive as a Lamb, said he, till by Chance, you heard one of the Men-servants coming down Stairs, when you told me you was afraid we were betrayed, and immediately set up such an Out-cry, as almost frightened me out of my Senses, and so stupified me, that I suffered even the Women to creep in upon me, without the least Opposition.

I presume, said I, that by this Time, your Lordship can spare me, having furnished yourself with such powerful Evidence against me; but to your Disgrace let me speak it, I challenge you to produce them for
your

your Purpose. Nay, so far will I be from shrinking from the Efforts of their utmost Malice, that name but your Day and Place, I will attend you with such a Cloud of Witnesses, as shall endanger some of your Ears in the Scuffle, or let me forfeit all Interest in my dear Lord for ever.

You talk very big, Madam, said the Earl; but were not the Reports of these Persons genuine, they could never be so uniform, and themselves so unconcerned. O! my good Lord, said I, you can't penetrate their Consciences. I am certain, they must have an Hell within them, as that my every Action, with regard to my Husband's Honor, is pure as the Heavens themselves. Then turning upon my Heel I left them.



CHAP. XI.

*Letter from Lord G—r—d to fetch
Biddy to Dublin. She obeys.
Near being undone by Stringer.
Stringer's Accident. She discovers
Stringer, in the Place of her
Husband.*

IT may much more be readily
conceived, than I am able to
describe, the miserable Life I still
led, from the Uncertainty I was
under, of what was become either
of my Husband, or my Children;
the Privation of whom in so un-
accountable a Manner, I could
never have survived, had not the
Earl's Impatience for inducing
me to relinquish my Claim to my
ever dear Lord, still encouraged me
to hope, that he was living, tho'
most undoubtedly under an unwilling
Restraint; but so long as I could
but

but flatter myself of his being alive, I bore up under his Absence, with uncommon Fortitude; waiting, with all the Patience I was Mistress of, till Providence should in its own due Time, unriddle the Mystery.

My late Adventure with the Earl, had scarce been concluded more than a Fortnight, before I received a Letter from Lord G--r--d, wherein he informed me, that Business of the utmost Consequence had called him over to *Ireland*, in such haste, that he could gain no possible Opportunity of notifying it to me before his Departure, by taking a formal Leave of me. His Engagements there, he intimated to be of such a Nature, as probably might detain him much longer than he had expected; adding, that he should find himself there, in a most melancholy Situation, unless I would favour him with my Company. He gave me Directions where to enquire for him; but

added, that being wholly unknown there, he chose to remain incognito; for which Reason, he had assumed the Name of *Shepard*, by which he desired me to enquire for him.

What could I think of this Letter! — A Voyage to another Kingdom, undertaken without my Participation, or even the least Hint of it to me, I could not but imagine to have somewhat very striking in it. Possibly, said I, this may be some Business of his Father's, that he has overpersuaded my Lord to engage in, as the Price of their future Reconciliation; and the Earl may have seized this Opportunity of his Absence, to work upon me to my own Confusion, that he may find somewhat culpable to charge me with, at my Lord's Return.

I then looked again at his Lordship's Letter, dubious of its Genuineness, and cautious lest I should be anywise imposed upon; for so much
Artifice

Artifice and Stratagem had been used with us both, that we were at a Loss to know on whom to rely.

I had now assured myself, that the Letter was of his Lordship's Writing, by comparing it with many others under his own Hand; but his Lordship cannot have taken his Children with him to *Ireland* too, thought I; then what can have become of them? I quitted this Thought, under the Reflection, that as they all left me on the same Day, and that without his Lordship's Expectation of such a Journey; so undoubtedly the Children must also be disposed of under his Knowledge and Consent; and that on my Arrival in *Dublin* I should be informed of their Destination; but the Letter to me being dated from *Dublin*, my whole Force was bent to a Compliance with it; his Lordship's Intimation of his Residence being sufficient, without more ado, to have sent me after him, not only into a neighbouring Kingdom,

but even to either *Indies*, with all Alacrity.

When these Cogitations had taken their Turn in my Mind, my Doubts again succeeding, I had Recourse again to the Letter, and also to the Note I had received, that had bereaved me of my Children, when after some Debate with myself, I was within an Hair's Breadth of condemning them both for counterfeit, till again examining them with others, I was but the more confirmed in my former Opinion, that they were both of his Lordship's own Hand.

It would have been impossible for me to say, but that his Lordship's Journey was judiciously taken, and that Matters unforeseen by me, might have required that Expedition, which was inconsistent with his apprizing me of it, before he arrived at *Dublin*; but now I was so certain of his Desire to find me there, I would suffer no Time to slip till I had

had put myself upon the Undertaking.

My first Enquiry was, for the Road I must take, and the usual Method of passing over thither; when being informed, that I should have but a short Passage by Sea from *Holyhead*, taking one Servant only with me, and a Trunk or two with my Baggage, we speedily arrived at *Dublin*, where my first Enquiry was, for the House of Mrs. *Newburgh*, where his Lordship, in his Letter, had intimated to me that he lodged.

I soon found it out according to Direction, and ordered my Servant to knock at the Door. It was a very genteel private House, so far as I could remark of it, in the Decline of the Day; and I was desired by the Servant who opened it, to walk in. I enquired for one Mr. *Shepard*, who was above in his Apartment, as the Maid told me. She said she would let him know I waited

waited for him, and desired me to send up my Name, which I told her was *Shepard*.

I waited full half an Hour before she returned, which at length she did, with an Answer; but I had all the while wondered prodigiously, what Business his Lordship should be engaged in, that could have occasioned me such a Delay; nothing having ever been so private in his Lordship's Affairs, that I might not have been admitted to.

She told me, that Mr. *Shepard* perceiving himself very ill, with a violent Cold he had caught, was gone to Bed; but upon her acquainting that him that my Name was *Shepard*, he had desired me to walk up to him.

So soon as I was satisfied of my being arrived at the right House, I sent away my Servant directly, to bring up my Baggage from the Ship, with Orders to take notice of the House, and to see it all safe conveyed
to

to me; and then I followed the Maid up Stairs to my dear Lord's Chamber, but under great Heaviness of Spirit at the Report I had heard of his Illness.

She conducted me into a dark Room, where the only Glimmer of Light that could enter, was the small Remains of the Twilight, which passed through a thick Pair of Window Curtains, and there she left me, to grope out my Way to the Bed-side, as well as I could, by such a faint Direction as I could there gain to it.

I soon heard a Stir of the Bed-curtains, and then calling, in a low Voice, My dear Lord! I was answered, in a strained Tone, so hoarse, as scarce to discover the least Clearness of Sound, or more than an articulated Aspiration. How does your Lordship do? said I. He replied, that a Cold he had taken lately, had entirely deprived him of his Voice, and that he was under such acute Pain with his Head and Limbs, that
he

he could scarce stir himself; then feeling for my Hand, and drawing me down to kiss him, he embraced me in his Arms for a considerable Time.

I know not how it happens, but there is an inexpressible Sympathy between the Sexes, upon the Contact of two Persons truly loving each other; but this, to my then thinking, not answering to my Desires, I ascribed it to his Disorder; for there had ever been a downy Softness and Glow, accompanying each Embrace of my dearest Lord, which I was not then sensible of; but instead thereof, my Lips were met by a Deadness, and damp clayey Touch, which not a little augmented my Uneasiness, lest his Lordship should have been much worse, than he suspected himself to be.

I enquired into each Symptom of his Disorder, separately; and prescribed several Remedies, assuring him, that I would that Night sit
up

up and attend him ; for that by endeavouring to keep him in a constant breathing Sweat, till Morning, I was in great Hopes, he would find himself better.

I was going down, as I told him, that I might send for such Things, as I apprehended would be beneficial for him ; but sitting then upon the Bed-side, and having my Hand in his, he would by no means suffer me to stir ; for that perceiving himself inclinable to sleep, he said, if he could but procure a good Night's Rest, he was in Hopes of being another Man, by Morning. Then desiring me to come to bed to him, he urged his Apprehension, that my sitting up with him, or administering any thing to him in the Night, would only keep him wakeful, and retard his Cure.

I, who had never been possessed of the Spirit of Opposition to the Will of my dearest Lord, would not now gainsay his Proposal ; but arising,
pre-

prepared for finding the further Side of the Bed, that I might there undress myself; where meeting with a Chair, I was sitting down to prepare for it, and my Baggage not being as yet arrived, I had already tied my Handkerchief about my Head, by way of Night-cap: but would no more offer at introducing a Candle; for that having at my first coming mentioned it, he declared his Head to be upon such a Rack, that the least Glimmer of Light would make him go distracted.

I had just unpinned my Gown, when he asked me whether I had locked the Door. To which I replied in the negative; nor did I readily know where to find it. He then, as well as he could utter himself, directed me round the Bed, and I retook my Place, as before.

I was now in my Under-petty-coat (without either Shoes or Stockings) and was untying that, in order to have stepped into Bed; when

when I perceived him to have a strong Tendency to coughing ; but observed, that he stifled it all he could ; till having some how caused a Stoppage in his Wind-pipe, he fell into such Agonies, with Rattling and Straining, that I expected no less than each succeeding Moment would have been his last, and that he must have been strangled, before it would be possible for me to collect any Help about me : For he now hooped so terribly, that I was almost terrified to Death at it.

Being in a strange House, where I had as yet seen not a living Soul but the Maid, I was under the greater Consternation, but my Fears for my dearest Lord, prompting me to the loudest Expressions of them then in my Power ; slipping on my Shoes, I stampt upon the Floor as hard as possible, and joining thereto my strongest Vociferations, it became very improbable, that any
living

living Creature could subsist within those Walls, without hearing me.

I hurried on such of my scattered Garments as I could first lay my Hands on, and had but just covered over my Body in the loosest manner, before the Family were in a Cluster at my Door; which having opened to them, for Goodness sake, said I, assist my poor Husband, or he must be strangled.

Snatching then the Candle from one of their Hands, I ran with it to the Bed-side, to see what condition my Husband was in; but his Face seemed so strained with his struggling, that it was not only ready to burst, but looked, to the full, as black as one's Hat; nor did I in my Fright, and under the shocking Appearance I then beheld him in, once mistrust his being my very Lord himself; but screaming out, my Husband is dead, my Husband is dead, the Terror I conceived at the Sight, cast me lifeless
into

into a Chair, which opportunely stood at the Bed's-foot, where I lay wholly insensible, of what was in future transacting.

Every one having now surrounded the Bed with a several Application, all possible means were used to his Relief ; but I was past yielding any Assistance, till every one crying out to draw back the Curtains, and give him Air, they at length brought him to a regular Breathing ; when they had leisure to consider the Condition I was reduced to.

No sooner had they recovered me from my Stupor, than longing for a Sight of my dear Husband, I flew to the Bed-side, to be ascertained of his Restoration to Life again ; when to my inexpressible Astonishment, who should my Eyes behold in the recovered Person, but the perfidious Villain, *Stringer*, as yet scarce capable of breathing with Composure, from the Flutter his Lungs had been in.

I shrieked

I shrieked out, just as the Company were about quitting the Room, and was very near a Relapse into my fainting Fit again, which occasioned their all returning; when observing an Air of Superiority in one of the Women, and instantly suspecting her for the Mistress of the Family, I intreated her to receive me under her Protection, and to permit me to some private Conference with her: For that what I had seen in her House, had so shocked me, that I was scarce able to bear it. This she most readily condescended to, and invited me into her Apartment.





CHAP. XII.

*Biddy claimed by Player as his Wife.
Strange Confusion to the By-standers.
Stringer claims her. They quarrel.
Turn it all upon Biddy. Threaten
her with a Prosecution for Bigamy.
Mrs. Newburgh responsible for her
forth-coming.*

NO sooner were we arrived in the Lady's Chamber, than I sent the Maid for such of my Clothes as I had left behind me in the other Room; but had scarce thoroughly dressed myself, before some body knocking hard at the Street-door, word was brought me, that a Gentleman was below, enquiring for a Lady, who had arrived there that Evening from *England*. This I suspecting to have been my Servant with my Baggage,
I de-

I desired the Lady's Leave for introducing him to me.

I had as yet had not the least Time or Opportunity for the stating my Case to the Lady, or of informing her of the Imposition put upon me by *Stringer*; though I purposed to have done it, so soon as we should have been a little settled; but whilst I was waiting for an Account of my Things from my Servant, the Maid ushered in to us, a Gentleman, whom I had never before seen, and pointed to me, as the Lady he had enquired for.

Is your Business with me, Sir? said I: When staring sternly in my Face; Base Wretch! said he, thou vile, ungrateful Woman! canst thou be at a Loss for the Knowledge of your own Husband? Husband! replied I; you must be grossly mistaken, Sir; I have indeed an Husband, but another Sort of Man than you are, I'll promise you. Pray examine me more narrowly, added I; have

I; have you ever in your Life seen me before? if so, its more than I can say of you, I am positive.

Confounded Artifice! Damned Hypocrite! Front of Adamant! said he: What! deny the Knowledge of your own Husband? Have you not been married to me these five Years? Have you not now four Children living by me? Have you not eloped from me in pursuit of one *Stringer*, who is lately come in this City before you? ——— Foul Adulterers! I heard of your Progress, and Paramour, and watched you from the Water-side to this House; nor doubt I, but the wicked Wretch your Seducer, is near at hand; but I shall leave no Stone unturned to discover him, and shall give you both your just Reward; at least, for yourself, Madam, as I have now found you, I shall make you a public Example, you may depend upon it.

I posi-

I positively declared to Mrs. *Newburgh*, (the Lady of the House being so called) and to some others, whom the Fellow's high Words had by this time gathered round me, that I had never seen the Man's Face before; that he was an entire Stranger to me, nor knew I so much as his Name.

He also, himself, began then to appeal to Mrs. *Newburgh*, whether it could be possible, that any Man should be mistaken in his own Wife, after so long a Cohabitation, as between him and me? And asked, whether they had ever before heard of such bare-faced Impudence as this, of a Woman's denying her own Husband to his Face? ——— Madam, added he, my Name is *Player*, and I profess to you, that every Word I have hitherto uttered to you is a Verity; but pray, what Name hath she given herself, since she hath been in your House?

Mrs.

Mrs. *Newburgh*, astonished at the Diversity of our Allegations, replied, that it was a mere Accident, that had brought her to the Knowledge of me at all, and that she had hitherto, had no Opportunity of enquiring my Name; but said, she took me for an *English* Lady, who had followed my Husband thither, who was her Lodger before I came over: For that he had assured her, he soon expected his Lady after him, and that she presumed, I was his Wife.

The Maid, who was standing by, then put in a Word, declaring, that at my first Arrival that Night, I had enquired for Mr. *Shepard*, who being ill, cried, Oh, it is my dear Wife, whom I have a long Time wish'd to see. Tell her I am not very well, and shew her up to me, immediately. She added, that so soon as she had shewn me the Chamber, she retired; that Mr. *Shepard* was then in Bed, and by her hearing no

more of me for some Time, she imagined no less, than that I had been in Bed with him.

O! this concerted Scene of Debauchery, said *Player*; but we all know, that Persons whose Proceedings are scandalous, for the most part, cover them under feigned Names, and Characters. That she is my Wife, I can justify before all the World; but I shall be glad to see the Person she calls *Shepard*, for most probably, though under some Disguise, I shall in him, discover the Traitor *Stringer*, as I am informed his Name is.

Sir, said I, the Assurance with which you utter these Falsities, so confound me, that I am at a Loss to think how it should be possible, for human Nature to degrade itself thus, as even to belye its own Heart, and contradict its own Conscience, as yours do now.

I doubt not, Madam, replied he, but my Presence confounds you, as indeed,

indeed, it well may: For that you expected me not here, is most certain; but that what I now urge, is either false, or contradictory to my Conscience, is not so clear, but that yourself will have an hard Task to prove it. Come, come, to put the Matter past all further Dispute, or Difficulty, added he; lead me to this *Shepard*, as you call him, and if he proves you his Wife, by superior Claim to myself, notwithstanding my legal Title to you, I will for ever renounce, and leave you.

Every one then present, allowed that the Gentleman had put it upon a very fair Footing, and advised me to join Issue with him; when I desired their Patience for a few Words. Madam, said I, addressing myself to Mrs. *Newburgh*, you are sensible it is scarce two Hours that I have been within your Doors, one of which, was near upon spent below, in waiting an Answer to my Demand, whether Mr. *Shepard* was at

home or not. I was then introduced to him, in a dark Room, he pretending to be ill of a Cold; but that Deceit was only a Pretext, to conceal his true Person from me. He had prevailed upon me to bed with him, as to my real Husband; and had not Providence interposed to the Prevention of it, by reducing him to the last Extremity by a Cough, of which you are Witnesses, I had most assuredly wrought my absolute Ruin with him: For with what Face could I ever have beheld my dear Lord G—r—d more, my only true and real Husband, after once I had dishonoured his Bed: But upon your Approach with a Light, my Distress for the Loss of my dear Lord, whom I verily expected to have found in the dying Man, for some Time deprived me of all Sensation; till perceiving upon his Recovery, how near I was to having delivered myself into the Arms of that very *Stringer*, this
Gentle-

Gentleman speaks of, you know Madam, with what Difficulty I was preserved from relapsing into my former Fainting; nor had I either Breath or Strength then left, for publishing the Cause of it.

You, Madam, well know, added I, that the Time I have had since my retiring with you, hath been far too short, for me to have perfected an Explanation of these Mysteries to you, for that this Man, who calls himself *Player*, (whoever he may really be) entered upon us, even before I was well dressed; and since his coming, I submit to you, from the Share he hath had in the Conversation, and the wonderful Things he has advanced, how little Opportunity I have had of putting in a Word till now; but whilst the Discourse is in my Hands, I shall, with your Leave, just proceed to inform you, that Lord G—r—d, eldest Son to the Earl of B——n, having wrote me Word

of his Arrival in this City, required me to follow him, and enquire for him at your House, by the Name of *Shepard*; for that his Lordship, intending to be private here, could not remain incognito in his proper Character, as he might, as a private Gentleman only.

For this Reason, nothing doubting but his Lordship had been here, and that it had been to him I had been conducted by your Servant, I made no scruple of approaching his Chamber, nor should I, of entering his Bed, had not this last, as I said, been providentially prevented.

I call Heaven and Earth to witness, that I know nothing of you, Sir; but as for the Villain, *Stringer*, it is not the first time, that he has well nigh been too many for me; having one Night in my own House, had the Impudence, in my Lord's Absence, to assume the Habit and Form of my Woman, and place himself in my Bed before me;
but

but Providence then also, averted the Mischief intended me, under that Stratagem. Nay, so ready am I to credit the worst of Plots from *Stringer*, that I am now fully persuaded, the whole Contrivance of bringing me hither, has been the Master-piece of that wicked Fellow, merely to subject me to his own vile Purposes.

What a cooked-up Story have we here? said *Player*; was there ever so fruitful an Invention? A mere Heap of Deceit, jumbled together, of a Lord and a Lady, an intended Rape, and I know not what; and this, only to raise a Mist, to cloud the Eye of a lawful Husband; but may I never see my native Shore again, if I have not ample Satisfaction from you both, before I have done with you.

Madam, said I, (for I scorn to hold parley with that Fellow, who must have suborned the Powers of Hell, for the Assurance he puts on,

to deceive me with, to my Face) my Servant, who is but gone to the Ship for my Baggage, when he returns, will soon clear up whether I am the Wife of a Peer of this Kingdom, or of that Impostor, who may be a Scotch Pedlar, for ought that I know to the contrary.

Player, then raising a sort of triumphant Smile, Come, come, said he, lead me the way to this *Stringer*, we may possibly gain some Truth from him, tho' I perceive it is not to be expected from this wretched Woman: For having once formerly seen him, I am apt to believe, I shall know him again.

We advanced to *Stringer's* Chamber, where we found him still in Bed; when *Player* opening the Curtains, Yes, said he, this is the very Man.—What, Sir, said he, can have induced you to run away with my Wife?——Your Wife? Sir, said *Stringer*, she was a Widow when I married her, and is now
my

my dearest Wife ; then shew me the Man on Earth, that dares to claim her from me.

I am that Man, said *Player*, and my Wife she hath been till within these three Months, that you, or some such Rascal, has inveigled her away from me.

Stringer then seeming in a violent Rage ; Stay, Sir, said he, till I rise. You shall have all the Satisfaction that one Gentleman may demand of another : But know, Sir, that no Man breathes long, after such an Affront as you have given me.—Rascal ! Rascal ! Sir, (dressing all the while as fast as possible) you shall swallow that Word, before I part with you. — That Lady, Sir, is *my* Wife, and yourself the Rascal, for suspecting she is not.—Pray, Sir, said *Player*, moderate your Warmth a little. What was her Name when you married her ? *Player*, replied *Stringer* ; a Widow, as she informed me ; nor have I so little Re-

gard for her, as ever to decline my Title to her.

I then plainly perceived, that this was all a concerted Scheme, between these two blustering Heroes, to distress me, whilst a Stranger in the Country, and to reduce me to the Acceptance of their Measures; and was proceeding with my Reflections thereon, when *Stringer* being drest, ran to his Sword, by way of Vindication of my Chastity, as he protested: For that an Injury offered to my Character, stabbed him to the very Soul. He could have passed by a Slight to himself; but the Man who should cast an Imputation upon me, should not survive, to repent the Indignity.

Mr. *Stringer*, said I, your Voice is finely mended since this Man's Visit to you. It is scarce half an Hour, since you was dying, and could whisper only, with hard Straining, you was so hoarse. Surely, my Dear, said he, you are mad.

I hoarse?

I hoarse?—I whisper?—What Crochet have you in your Head now?—Then turning to Mrs. *Newburgh*, This Fellow, Madam, said he, has turned my poor Wife's Brain.

Gentlemen, said Mrs. *Newburgh*, this Flood of Mysteries, is too unfathomable for me to wade in.—I am wholly lost in Amaze and Intricacy. Either this Lady is unworthy of the Sex she bears, or she is highly injured by you both, and hath an hard Card to play between you.

Madam, said I, suspend your Opinion of me till my Servant returns from on board; he will soon dispell all these Vapours, and set Matters in a clear Light again.

Though I had expected no less than the Death of one, or both of these Champions, from the Fury of their first Menaces to each other, till they were both upon a square for Action; yet, no sooner might they have engaged upon equal
Terms,

Terms, had they been so disposed, than their Swaggering subsided with cool Reasoning; and that no further Animosity might subsist between themselves, they transferred their Rancour for each other, wholly against me; and as seemingly very good Friends, both imposed upon by the same Object, having conferred upon the Clearness of both their Nuptials with me, they combined in a Determination, to prosecute me for Bigamy, and insisted, that unless Mrs. *Newburgh* would be responsible for my Forth-coming in the Morning, they would secure me that very Night by a Peace-officer.

I being a perfect Stranger to Mrs. *Newburgh*, she was somewhat cautious of intermeddling in an Affair, where she might eventually come into Trouble; but was nevertheless so averse from my being taken into Custody by an Officer, that conceiving there was somewhat, (as she

she afterwards complimented me) both in my Story and Behaviour, convictive of her Judgment in my Favour, notwithstanding all their Allegations against me, she generously undertook for my Appearance to any Charge that they might exhibit against me in the Morning; but having all of us wearied ourselves in the Argument, we separated ourselves for Rest, and Mrs. *Newburgh* being a Widow Lady, took me for her Bed-fellow.





C H A P. XIII.

Biddy relates her Hardships to Mrs. Newburgh. Mrs. Newburgh credits her. Biddy loses her Servant and Baggage. Stringer bath a Conference with Biddy. Purport. A Scene of Villainy to distress Biddy.

IT is not to be presumed, that having so much Matter in my Head, we two Women could take much Rest, till I had disburdened myself of the Load that then oppressed me; so that before Morning, Mrs. *Newburgh* was almost as much Mistress of my Life, Marriage, Distresses, and Difficulties, as I myself was, nor did I blazon *Stringer's* Character in less worthy Colours, than it deserved.

In short, my little History had so wrought Mrs. *Newburgh* into a favorable

avorable Opinion of me, that she assured me, she should give herself not the least Concern after my safe Keeping; but would permit me, upon my Parole of Honor, to behave as I pleased.

Having neither seen or heard from my Servant, since I had sent him to bring up my Baggage; in the Morning, I grew greatly concerned at it, and expressed myself so to Mrs. *Newburgh*; when she told me, I was at Liberty to go down to the Ship, and enquire after him, if I pleased; nothing doubting, but her Honor was safe in my Hands; but informed me, what time her Dinner would be ready, hoping I should be at home by that Time.

I accepted of her Kindness, and descending to the Quay, the utmost Intelligence I could there gain was, that the Vessel from which I had landed the preceding Day, was failed for *London*, through the
Downs,

Downs, and by all that I was further able to learn, had my Servant on board her.

This went so near to my Heart, that it sunk me more than all that had hitherto befallen me, since my first landing: For what could become of me in a strange Country? or how should I clear my Way back again, without Money and other Necessaries?

I had only some running Cash in my Pocket; my Banker's Notes, to the Amount of two hundred and odd Pounds, which I had packed up with my Clothes, and which would have been as good as ready Money to me, being all plundered, and conveyed away from me, I knew not whither; together with every Shift of Linen and Apparel, that I had shipped on board with me.

Sometimes, I imagined that my own Servant had proved the Thief, had landed the Goods, and run
away

away with them by Land; sometimes, that he had procured the Vessel to set Sail with him to *London*, that he might receive the Cash on my Notes, and whatever else would arise from the Sale of my other Things; then again, I would check myself for my Suspicions of him, who, in all other Cases, had demeaned himself faithfully to me, and my Course of Thought biassed me, to judge ill of the whole Vessel's Crew, who imagining my Boxes might contain Matters of no mean Value, might have carried off my Man involuntarily, and not only so, but might possibly murder him, to pave their Way, with less Danger, to the Plunder.

After framing several Conjectures in my Mind, I began to form an Argument from the Conduct of *Stringer* and *Player*, on the foregoing Night, (for there could be no Villainy so desperate, or Machination so iniquitous, that I could
not

not conclude them capable of) that possibly, the Departure of the Vessel might have been procured by their Means; in order the more to depress me, and render me more supple to their Purposes: For I no sooner saw *Stringer* at Mrs. *Newburgh's*, than I quitted all Doubt, that the Scheme to bring me thither was the Earl's; not only to remove me from the Power and Knowledge of my Husband, but also from *England* too, (where I might, and with Facility could, have justified myself, from every malicious Imputation) into the Hands of those Tools of his Indignation, till they might reduce me to such a State, as to prefer his late Offer, and my Liberty, to perpetual Harassing, and Conflicts, under Disgrace, and Penury.

This, I say, I now made no Doubt of; but whenever the Earl's Stratagems recurred to my Mind, the Delight I took in counteracting
and

and opposing them, proved the most friendly Balsam to my wounded Spirits ; for then, I wrought from Inclination, which added Vigor to every Resolve tending that Way.

Having gained at the Water-side, the best Information that I could of the Vessel, my Servant, and Goods, and that fully sufficient to satisfy me, that I should never see either of them more, I kept up my Spirits, upon the Prospect of the Banker's answering such Draughts as I should make upon him, and posted back to Mrs *Newburgh*, with the melancholy State of my Affairs, and under full View of writing to the Banker for that Purpose, by the next Pacquet ; and for stopping Payment of any lost Notes, in case they should be tendered to him ; and also, I thought to desire him, to send my Servants thirty Pounds for their Subsistence, till my Return to them.

Upon

Upon summoning my Purse, it answered to eighteen broad Pieces, which I hoped would prove a Competency, till my Returns from *England* should arrive, and then entering Mrs. *Newburgh's* Room, I surrendered myself her Prisoner.

She informed me, that Mr. *Shepard*, whom I called *Stringer*, had been with her, desiring to see me. That she had signified to him my being abroad upon my Parole; and that she expected me before Dinner-time.

He seemed, she said, to have coveted an Intimacy with her, beyond what she had approved, from the indifferent Character I had given her of him; but that he would obtrude his Sentiments upon her, right or wrong; insinuating, that if he could but have half an Hour's Talk with me, before *Player* began to be troublesome, he doubted not but that I would go off with him, and thereby escape *Player's* Fury:
For

For that he was determined to prosecute me for a double Marriage, and had been advising with his Lawyer upon it already; but said, he believed nothing would be concluded upon as that Day; and that he would wait in his Room till I came in, of which he desired to have the earliest Notice.

We debated it over for some Time, whether I should give him a Meeting, or deny myself to him; when at length, it was upon many Accounts agreed, that I should see him, lest by declining it, I might seem to indicate a guilty Conscience, which would avoid the Touch-stone of Truth. I therefore sent the Maid to inform him of my Return, and that if he had any thing to communicate to me, I was then with Mrs. *Newburgh*, in her Dining-room.

In Answer to this, *Stringer* returned, that he would intreat the Favour of some Conference with
me

me in his own Chamber; but that I absolutely refused him, assuring him, by the same Messenger, that my Choice, which even led me to decline the Sight of him at any Rate, would never more permit me to engage singly in Company with him again, but that if he had any thing to offer, fit for me to hear, it could not consist of so private a Nature, as for me to exclude Mrs. *Newburgh* from the Participation of it; so that I desired him, either to deliver himself in her Presence, or to lay aside all Thoughts of offering it to me.

Though this was by no means agreeable to *Stringer's* Inclination, whose Mind was fraught with such a Cargoe, as was by no means adapted to a public Audience; yet, sensible his every Effort to gain me to himself, would prove unsuccessful, after the Answer I had returned him to his Request, he ventured in to us, where solemnly alledging,
that

that he had Privacies to offer to my Consideration, proper only for my own Notice, he begged the Favour of Mrs. *Newburgh* to withdraw, for a few Minutes, since his Business would require no Length of Time with me.

I peremptorily opposed her leaving me, which he as strenuously insisting upon, and with some seeming Sincerity asserting, that he had matter of the last Import to my Welfare to inform me of, I began, through the bent of natural Curiosity, to slacken the Rigor of my first Resolution, by submitting to her leaving us, upon her Engagement to stir no further from us, than the next Room, and to return upon the least Call, or other Noise that she should hear: For I own, I was not without Hopes, that possibly he might have reflected so seriously, as to have seen his Folly, and have repented of the treacherous Service he had embarked in; by which means,

means, I might, probably, have penetrated the Depth of the Earl's Policy, and been the better prepared for counterplotting him.

Mrs. *Newburgh*, having now left us together, (though I would by no means suffer him to lock the Door) he thus began to acost me.

Madam, said he, since no intruding Eye can penetrate, no officious Ear can collect, or subtle Sense perceive, what passes from me to you, but your own; so as to occasion any Alteration in, or Abortion to, what is, or may be proposed to you, or in future accomplished; I beg leave to explain myself so fully to your Comprehension, that neither Doubt, or Scruple of my Meaning, may remain with you.

Believe me, Madam, I am not about to justify, either my prior Conduct at his Lordship's, or the Part I have acted between the Earl of B——n, and your Ladyship, or what may have since happened,
from

from any Motive of my own; sensible as I am of my own Deficiency, should I attempt it; but Madam, that future Events may glide in a Channel most agreeable to you, I take leave to offer my Advice to your Ladyship.

You are but too well apprized, with what Inveteracy the Earl of B——n prosecutes his Rancour against you. It is with an Eye full of Vengeance, that he beholds in you, a Daughter-in-Law; since by your Marriage with his Son, he is deprived of those Advantages, which from the Alliances his Father could unite him to, would redound to his Family.

Your Ladyship is not now to learn, (for surely by your Sufferings, you must long ere now have experienced) that neither yourself, or Lord G—r—d, can have the least peaceable Moments in Expectation, so long as the Earl lives; For assure

yourselves, his Devices against you, will but conclude with his Being.

Now, what I have before hinted at, tends equally to the Inquietude of you both; but what I am in the next Place to proceed to, will principally relate to yourself.

What reverfionary Hopes can you form to yourself from Lord *G--r--d*, upon his Father's Death? Will he not then feel the Devestiture of a noble Estate, which will have passed into other Hands, and might all have been his own, but for that you were his Wife? With what an Eye of scorn, contempt, and hatred, must he then behold you? As poisonous must you then prove to his Sight, or Touch as an Asp, or Viper. Madam he must curse the Day that first made you inseparably his own, for it can never be presumed, that Lord *G--r--d*, with all his Virtues, can so absolutely divest himself of human Passions, as not to repine at the Loss of such vast Acquisitions

as

as yourself will be the only Impediment to his obtaining. What less then must you expect, than to be despised, spurned at, turned out of Doors, and abandoned by him, as the guilty Authorefs of his undoing? He must, I say, whilst human Passions govern him, loath and detest you; and possibly, in the Summit of his Desperation, reduce you to the Dregs of Misery.

Madam, added he, the Scene that I have thus undertaken to plan out to you, is not so uncommon, as that it should be suspected for a vain Chimera, and yet, it is avoidable. Were it not better then, in time to bethink yourself, and whilst Lord G—r—d's Peace is still attainable, and your own Comforts in Life may be lasting, to renounce your Claim to him, before you may become sensible of the Pangs of an involuntary Separation? Had you not better, I say, testify your Compliance to the Earl's Desires, by

the Acceptance of another Husband, (for nothing less than that will be a sufficient Security, against your future Claim to Lord G--r--d, in the Earl's Opinion) and bind him firmly to your future Interest ?

I had no longer Patience at this Harrangue ; but was about to have replied with some Warmth ; which *Stringer* perceiving, stopt me short. Dear Madam, said he, here me out.—Nothing, I say, but your Marriage to some other Man, can convince the Earl of your hearty Concurrence with his Wishes, and the Interest of his Son, and instate you in a settled Course of Tranquility, under the Sunshine of his future Favors to you.

I am ready, Madam, to accept you for my Wife, nor shall I insist upon other Merit, than an inviolable Affection for you. I am certain it would be in vain should I attempt it ; but that you may be assured of a comfortable Subsistence as my
Wife,

Wife, (in case you shall sufficiently consider your own advantage to be come so) his Lordship, of his Bounty, will bestow on each of us, a thousand Pounds, upon the Day of our Marriage, and allow us each, an Annuity of a clear hundred Pounds a-year; with which Donations, I doubt not, but we may pass through the Remainder of Life, happily:

As for your Children, Madam, added he, they are provided for, and will be no more burdensom to you. Your Coach, your Horses, your household Furniture, all are sold and gone, not a Rag is left you, nor will Lord G--r--d ever see you more. Now, whether of these is the better, either by your obstinately adhering to your Claim to Lord G--r--d, who in Obedience to his Father's Commands has deserted you, to render both him and yourself contemned by the Earl, and miserable? Or by accepting of me

3

for

for your Husband, not only to subsist happily yourself; but at the same time, to restore his Lordship to the Care and Protection, of an indulgent Parent?

These, Madam, being the Benefits to redound from a Compliance to the Earl's Will; permit me some what more to enlarge upon the Consequences, most assuredly attendant on your Contumacy. You cannot be insensible, to the Infelicity of your present Condition, from the Process that has hitherto been concerted to distress you, and possibly, to deprive you of Life, at least, of all future Credit, and Character in Life; and all Favour from Lord G—r—d: For *Player* will swear you to be his Wife, and that you have so been for many Years, and of this he will produce Evidence, who were present at your Nuptials with him. I also am compelled to do the like; which, your following me by the Name of *Shepard*,

pard, enquiring for me by that Name, as my Wife, with your acknowledging me for your Husband before Mrs. *Newburgh* and her Family, when you convoked them all to my Assistance; your readiness to have bedded with me, and many other Circumstances, which in due Time will all be marshalled against you, will but the more contribute to confirm.

Now, these Things all laid together, and duly weighed, how will you, Madam, added he, in a strange Country, destitute of all manner of Supplies, (for your Servant and Baggage have been disposed of by *Player's* Means, and all Payments likewise stopt at your Banker's) how will you, I say, divested of all future Aid, Relief, and Sustenance, as also of every Hope of Evidence (save your own Word, which in your own Cause will avail nothing) how can you, I say, in opposition

to

to the clear, and positive Evidence, that will be offered to your Discredit, pretend to stem the Tide, that must so impetuously bear you down before it?

Madam, added he, you must be lost, you must be undone; and that irretrievably too, and without Redemption; unless, beholding your own Interest in the Mirrour I have exposed to your View, you comply to a Marriage with me; in which Case only, I can assure you of better Days, and both of his Lordship's, and his Father's Benevolence, to us both.

The END of the FIRST VOLUME,

